A Study of the Use of Tuba in Ralph Vaughan Williams’ Nine Symphonies

D.M.A. Document

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By

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Abstract

An analysis of Vaughan Williams use of tuba in his nine symphonies is presented. Specific orchestrational techniques that apply to the tuba part are identified and documented. Some of the techniques examined include: low instrument grouping, isolation and alternation of same family instrument groups, the tuba’s place in thematic development, the tuba’s role as evoking emotional response, and the tuba’s function in bass line.
Dedicated to my parents, Patrine and Robert Bottomley
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Abbreviations and Pitch Designations

References to dynamic markings appear with their standard musical abbreviations in italics (Times New Roman, 12-pt. typeface) as follows: sfz, ffff, fff, f, mf, mp, p, pp, ppp, pppp, etc.

Pitch Designations

Throughout this document, a note referred to without regard to its specific octave register is designated by a capital letter (A, B, C). A note in a particular octave is designated in italic typeface according to the following system:

Musical Examples

All musical examples in this document were created with Finale® notation software. The sources are from the editions of symphony scores listed in the bibliography.
Introduction

Ralph Vaughan Williams is known to virtually every professional tubist because of his tuba concerto, which is still, to this day, the most often performed tuba concerto. In addition to the tuba concerto, Vaughan Williams employs the tuba in seven of his nine symphonies, and in a number of smaller works as well. Excerpts from the concerto, symphonies, and wind band music are on the audition lists for both symphony orchestras and military bands. In view of the instrument’s obvious importance in his work, the following study will have as its subject Vaughan Williams’ use of the tuba in his symphonies.

On the surface, a study of the use of the tuba in the orchestration of Vaughan Williams’ symphonies might seem like a rather esoteric study of minutiae. I believe it is justified, however, in part because Vaughan Williams’ orchestral practices have not been the subject of a major study, despite his status as one of the foremost representatives of English music. Indeed, he has been credited with creating a distinctly “English” style of music. Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling state when speaking of Vaughan Williams that, “the absolute identification of composer with nation is taken for granted.”¹

There are many studies that attempt to identify the traits that make the music of Vaughan Williams sound “English.” Not surprisingly, one of the most important influences on Vaughan Williams in creating this sound was the English folksong itself. Its influence is manifested in several ways, perhaps most prominently by the use of modal harmonies and melodies. Although

¹ Hughes and Stradling, The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940, 165.
Vaughan Williams music is infused with folk-based material, there are many other aspects that define the composer’s style and create an identifiable character in his music. One of the most important of these is orchestration.

For purposes of this study, the focus will be on orchestral techniques that impact the listener. It is assumed that when the tuba has melodic material it is influenced by modal writing that is pervasive throughout all of Vaughan Williams’ music. Although he is often regarded as a “traditional” composer (an epithet that seem to have come into use with the rise of atonal music), Vaughan Williams expanded traditional form in his symphonies through his use of the Epilogue and expanded traditional harmony through his use of modes. Elliot Schwartz says that Vaughan Williams, “managed to develop, within the context of the traditional, a style that was unique and that was by all means contemporary.”

Vaughan Williams himself said, “Great music is written, I believe, not by breaking with tradition, but by adding to it.” Certain, his writing for the tuba in the symphonies can be seen as coming from a traditional approach, but with his own unique stamp on it. The tuba is always put in a normal range and no attempt is made to create “modern” or avant-garde sounds on the instrument. This in no way diminishes the role of the tuba as an integral part of Vaughan Williams’ symphonic expression. The tuba not only shares in thematic development, but is critical in evoking moods and intensifying emotional impact through various orchestral techniques.

Vaughan Williams personality is definitely intertwined with his use of specific instruments, particularly the tuba. His personality is described by Lionel Pike as being two-faced; that of rage and peace. This duality and its inherent conflict is manifest in his symphonies as Vaughan Williams explores his innermost feelings. This dichotomy can be seen on a broad

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2 Schwartz, The Symphonies of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 201.
3 Pike, Vaughan Williams and the Symphony, 8.
scale: the Symphony No. 5 can be seen as a “journey into lightness” and the Symphony No. 6 can be seen as a “journey into darkness.” More often than not, the tuba represents the forces of darkness and turmoil in these conflicts. The Symphony No. 3 and Symphony No. 5 are the most pastoral and introspective of the nine symphonies, therefore, the tuba is hardly used, or not at all in the case of Symphony No. 5.

It is in Symphonies No. 4 and No. 6 that the tuba’s role is seen most clearly. These symphonies could be dubbed the “war” symphonies because the tremendous conflict that exists in them that may reflect the events surrounding them: the rise of fascism and the war in Europe. The tuba is linked very strongly with the trombones in these two symphonies. The combination of these instruments makes for tremendous projection capabilities and the effective expression of violent conflict. Elliot Schwartz points out that “Vaughan Williams expressed himself in clear, direct, often blunt ways, in his written English as well as his musical speech.” The tuba and trombones are often the bearer of that bluntness. In fact, Vaughan Williams was often criticized for his “too heavy” orchestration. He himself said, “over scoring has always been one of my vices.” Despite this statement, he continued to score heavily from the beginning of Symphony No. 1 until the end of Symphony No. 9, making “over scoring” a hardly relevant term. Vaughan Williams scores in broad, bold gestures with massive contrast; with each heavy section, there is a soft thinly scored section in close proximity.

The scale of these contrasts is sometimes influenced by programmatic or descriptive elements. The Symphonies No. 1, 2, 3, and 7 are titled and direct the listener to a specific set of characterizations. The Symphony No. 1 is entitled “The Sea Symphony,” so it is fitting that the

5 Schwartz, The Symphonies of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 196.
tuba, along with the other brass instruments, would represent the majesty and volatility of the sea. The Symphony No. 7 is entitled “Symphonia Antarctica,” in which the low brass evoke the ever-present danger as well as conjure images of vast arctic vistas. The massive climaxes that are present throughout the symphonies are hallmarks of Vaughan Williams style just as much as the lighter pastoral qualities. The study of these extreme contrasts is essential to understanding the place of the tuba in Vaughan Williams orchestral language.

It is also important to put the symphonies in context. Vaughan Williams saw tremendous tragedy in his life with the two world wars. His complex emotions are reflected and even worked out through writing of the symphonies. As is evidenced in Symphony No. 6, there are not always simple solutions to life’s dilemmas. In this symphony violent conflict provides no path to resolution, only to utter destruction and desolation. These intense emotions are so powerfully and genuinely expressed that his symphonies have had great staying power and are frequently performed across the globe. One of the key ways he communicates with the audience is through orchestration, of which the tuba is a key player.
Chapter 1: Symphony No. 1

Vaughan Williams Symphony No. 1, written in 1909 when the composer was thirty seven years old, carries the title “A Sea Symphony,” and is written for large orchestra, chorus, and a soprano and a baritone soloist. There are four movements, with each given a descriptive title: Movement I, “A Song for all Seas, all Ships” (Sonata Form), Movement II, “On the Beach at Night alone” (Ternary Form), and Movement III “Scherzo: The Waves” (Binary Form), and Movement IV, “The Explorers” (approximate Rondo Form).

The poetry that is sung by the chorus and soloists is from poems of Walt Whitman, although modified to fit the music.1 (See Appendix C for texts.) The original poems are part of Walt Whitman’s collection of poems entitled Leaves of Grass.2 Many of the orchestrational techniques are designed to heighten the emotional impact of the poetry. Although not strictly programmatic, the music attempts to evoke the images and moods of the sea. In some ways, the Symphony No. 1 is more like a grouping of four tone poems than a traditional symphonic form. Even the note in the title page of the score suggests this by stating that individual movements of the score can be performed separately. However, there is sharing of thematic material that connects the movements as a whole.

The primary function of the tuba in Symphony No. 1 is not solely harmonic and melodic, but rather serves to intensify the dramatic and pictorial aspects of the music, especially the

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1 Pike, Vaughan Williams and the Symphony, 24.
2 Whitman, Walt. Leaves of Grass. Originally Published in 1855. The version used for purposes of this document was published by Prometheus Books, 1995.
physical motion of waves. Throughout the four movements of this work, Vaughan Williams depicts the depths and intensity of the sea through orchestrational techniques that freely combine various instrumental families and their tone colors in imaginative ways.

The most direct correlation between the “program” of the symphony and the orchestrational techniques used to present it is in Movement III, Scherzo. The Scherzo movement itself is titled “The Waves,” and indeed waves of orchestral sound ebb and crest throughout the entire work. The tuba generally represents the peak or crest of the waves as part of large orchestral tutti sections, but is also used more subtly by weaving in and out of bass lines to create the sense of the always changing sea.

Vaughan Williams’ orchestration helps create dramatic climaxes in which the low brass add depth to the “wave crest”. He repeatedly uses the tuba’s explosive power to bolster the impact of the bass instruments of the orchestra. He indicates these moments with several of the same terms throughout, including, brillante as in measure 4 of Movement I, marcato as in measure 27 of Movement I, and molto pesante as in measure 124 or Movement I. The tuba tends to be grouped together with several other bass instruments throughout the entire symphony. This group consists of bass clarinet, bassoon, contra bassoon, bass trombone, and double bass. Occasionally, cellos, horns, or organ join this group as well. When in this grouping the tuba is always put in its most powerful register. This can be seen as soon as measure 4 in Movement I. As an answer to the brilliant ff of the trumpet and horn fanfare and the chorus singing, “behold the sea”, the full orchestra responds with a powerful D Major chord with all of the bass instruments doubling the root in octaves. The tuba is by far the most powerful of these bass instruments, with the possible exception of the pipe organ in this instance, as seen in Example 1.1:
Example 1.1 Symphony No. 1, mvt I, mm 1-4.

Vaughan Williams is setting up an orchestral technique (which will be addressed later in this chapter) that will be used throughout his symphonies, whereby he isolates and contrasts separate groups of instruments either to heighten tension, or to help depict a particular event or scene. More examples this type of explosive use of the tuba are in measures 45, 108 and 387 in...
Movement I, and in measures 64 and 315 in Movement III, and in measures 446 and 452 in Movement IV.

With such heavy doubling of bass instruments one would expect the result to be a heavy or dark sound. Vaughan Williams, however, has the low group carefully paired with the woodwinds and high brass in their most brilliant register, giving the effect of just adding volume to the sound. He seems to use the orchestra like a giant pipe organ in which stops can be added for color and/or volume as needed. In measure 329 in Movement I, the tuba and contra bassoon can be seen as an actual substitute for the organ as they sustain a pedal point for nineteen bars with breaks only for air. At measure 64 in Movement III the tuba and bassoons are used again without the doubling of the double basses. At measure 359 in Movement III the contra bassoon and tuba are rhythmically independent from the Basses, Cellos and bassoons, but still on the same pitch of “B”. Similarly, at measure 41 in Movement I, the basses drop out and just the tuba and bassoons are left alone to crescendo into the *poco animando*. For all practical purposes this becomes a tuba solo. Vaughan Williams obviously likes the tonal color this coupling of tuba and reed instruments creates. This is not surprising, given that Vaughan Williams was a huge advocate of J.S. Bach’s music. In Bach’s organ works it would be standard to have the mellower 16’ stop paired with a more “biting” reed stop.

Each time Vaughan Williams uses bass-instrument doubling of the same material, it is subtly varied. He never repeats the exact orchestration in restatements. This is seen in Movement III with a recurring motive in the bass instruments at measures 75, 82, 198, 202, and 207. Each statement is made with a slightly different group of low instruments, but the one common feature is that the tuba is the dominant sound every time. Example 1.2 below highlights just the opening bars of measures 75-76 and measures 82-83:
Example 1.2 Symphony No. 1, mvt III, m 75 and m 82.

The role of the tuba is a very prominent one in the Symphony No.1, even though there are not great technical demands placed on the tubist. The challenge for the performer then becomes one of determining the intended role of the tuba in each instance. Many times the tuba fulfills its traditional role with extensive doubling of the bass line. However, Vaughan Williams constantly manipulates the tuba’s role in the bass line. Sometimes the tuba’s role is to punctuate and add clarity, at other times it is to add raw power, and even occasionally fulfill a melodic function.

In fact, one of the most obvious features in the Symphony No. 1 is the extensive doubling of the bass line. The tuba mostly serves to bring the bass line to prominence. This can be seen in extended passages in which the tuba is constantly weaving in and out of the bass line. The primary question then becomes, why not have the tuba double continuously? I believe the reason is so that Vaughan Williams can serve the programmatic element of the sea, or more specifically, the surges of waves. This effect is found in all of the movements except the more subdued
Movement II. One example of this weaving pattern is in Movement I in measures 7-17 as seen in Example 1.3 below:

Other examples of this weaving technique can be found in Movement I in measures 378-394. In measure 372, the tuba is absent from the surging dynamic motion; instead the bass trombone joins with the bassoons and basses. Two measures later, the tuba enters and the bass trombone drops out. Then in measure 375 the trombones and tuba double the cellos, basses, and contra bassoon, swelling to the marked \( f \) dynamic before suddenly receding to \( pp \). Although the woodwinds and low brass drop out, the bass line continues. The tuba joins in again as the dynamics start to increase. The tuba usually enters and propels the bass instruments to the surge peak at the \( f \) dynamic, adding depth and volume to the ensemble by its very presence, as shown below in Example 1.4. This becomes a pattern throughout the Symphony No. 1.
Example 1.4 Symphony No. 1, mvt. I, mm 378-393.
Example 1.4 Continued.

Tempo del principio, ma molto largamente.

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At the largest climaxes, the tuba is doubled by the bass trombone at the octave which can also be clearly seen in Example 1.4. The bass trombone and tuba stay in the low register, creating a massive sustained sound that could threaten to overbalance the rest of the orchestra, except that the melodic material is also extensively doubled. Once again, the end result is a very dramatic and brilliant sound, despite the doubling of the tuba, bass trombone, contra bassoon, and basses.

The few times the tuba has melodic material it is almost always doubled with the bass trombone as seen in Movement I measures 27-30 in Example 1.5 below:

Example 1.5 Symphony No. 1, mvt I, mm 27-30.

In measure 148 of Movement I, the tuba and trombone section are the sole carriers of the melody, with tuba and bass trombone in unison this time. An important motive is brought to prominence by the bass trombone and tuba in Movement I in measures 348, 351, and 354. Again, the standard low voice doubling with basses, cellos, bassoons, bass trombone, and tuba is used, but it is the tuba and bass trombone that bring this melodic fragment to the fore. In Movement IV in measures 101-104 and 124-126 the trombone section and tuba function as one in presenting this melodic idea. This is one of the few times that Vaughan Williams uses the low brass to present a melodic idea in a very soft and exposed manner. The color of the low brass represent the somber mood of the text that the chorus is singing in measures 101-104: “With never-happy hearts, with that sad incessant refrain, - Wherefore unsatisfied soul?” The ff statement of this
melody, as presented in Movement IV, measures 173 to 174, is much more common. (See Example 1.6.)

Example 1.6  Symphony No. 1, mvt IV, mm 173-174.

Here the bass trombone and tuba dominate this re-statement of the motive from Movement I. This theme is presented one last time in measure 208 with the bass trombone and tuba sharing in a large orchestral tutti statement of this motive. Again, the power of the tuba and trombones are reflective of the text, “The true son of God shall come singing his songs.”

The interweaving of the tuba in Movement III from measures 113-181 is particularly unusual in that the tuba joins the basses and cellos while the bass line is already in progress as seen in Example 1.7. The tuba enters in measure 114 and continues to double for nine measures before dropping out. The difference this time is that Vaughan Williams put the tuba in the mid range instead of the low range of the instrument. This creates the effect of a solo for the tuba. The tuba entry one bar before the chorus entry also sets up the bass and tenor entrance in the chorus. One has to wonder if Vaughan Williams has used the tuba as the embodiment of the
chorus text at this point. The tuba plays only as long as duration of the text, “laughing and buoyant,” as shown in Example 1.7:

Example 1.7 Symphony No. 1, mvt III, mm 114-123.
In measures 129-140 the tuba returns to the low register with the addition of the bass trombone for added heaviness. In yet another subtle change, the tuba enters the bass line in measure 147 an octave higher than the basses. The tuba is marked *marcato* and has eighth notes against the basses’ quarter notes as seen in Example 1.8 below:

Example 1.8 Symphony No. 1, mvt IV, mm 150-153.

This is another technique in which Vaughan Williams keeps the texture from getting too heavy, yet still accentuates the bass line. Shortly later in measure 170, the tuba is returned to the low register to become the dominant bass voice again.

Movement IV is also structured with the tuba part interweaving as well. One example is in measures 29-41. In measures 29-34 the tuba is the dominant bass instrument, but drops out in measure 35, leaving the bass trombone to fulfill that role until the tuba rejoins in measure 36 in unison. This is one of the few times in the entire Symphony that the bass trombone and tuba are in unison. The ability of the low brass to overpower did not escape Vaughan Williams’ notice. He indicates “*ma non troppo*” next to the dynamic only in the low brass parts. This subtle indication is important because it shows that Vaughan Williams was aware of the power of the trombones and tuba, yet he scored very heavily throughout the entire symphony.

Another variation of the weaving technique is in movement IV in measures 503-524. The tuba doubles the basses and cellos and is largely independent from the trombone section. However, starting in measure 514 the brass section forms block chords, with the voicing being
tight and dense. Although the tuba is still doubling, it is obvious that it has become the dominating bass instrument for the brass section.

An additional technique that Vaughan Williams uses is to contrast a solo instrument or voice with a full symphony orchestra as seen in Movement I, measures 266 and 393, where the Soprano soloist comes out of the full orchestra $ff$ texture. In both powerful passages, the chorus sings “one flag above the rest,” symbolizing the unity of all sea explorers. In a dramatic use of text painting the Soprano soloist, in measure 392, soars up to a high d” at the words “above all the rest.” The tuba along with the brass section, in this instance, is used in a very traditional manner to create a very untraditional effect.

Another characteristic of the tuba in this symphony is its ability to shift its role of bass function between different instrument groups. One of the most striking aspects of the Symphony No. 1 is Vaughan Williams’ use of extreme contrast in orchestral color. This effect will continue throughout his later symphonies and is seen very clearly in Movement II starting at measure 127 as seen in Example 1.9 below:
Example 1.9 Symphony No. 1, mvt II, mm 127-130.
The orchestral *tutti* reaches its climax at measure 127 and then the strings drop out, leaving only woodwinds, brass, and percussion. This is, in essence, a classic wind band with the tuba, bass trombone, bassoons, forming the bass for this grouping of instruments. In this case the purpose is to reflect the previous sung text, “All nations, all identities that have existed or may exist, all lives and deaths, all of the past present, future. This vast similitude spans them, and always has spanned, and shall for ever span them, and shall compactly hold and enclose them.” It could represent the grand vastness and eternal nature of the sea, but whatever the interpretation, the color and dynamic contrast are stunning in this otherwise quiet and reflective movement. In Movement IV at measure 520, the strings drop out entirely, leaving the wind band to finish the last fortissimo outburst of the Symphony No. 1.

Throughout Movement II Vaughan Williams highlights different groupings of instruments by contrasting them directly. In measure 11 he creates a grouping of bassoons, horns, trombones, and tuba for one measure followed by strings alone in the very next measure. This alternating pattern continues throughout this movement, although with expanding differences in instrument groupings. From measure 99-125 the woodwinds and strings alternate responses.

The tuba states the motive, in inversion, that is established by the strings in the opening measures of movement II as seen in example 1.10 below:
Example 1.10 Symphony No. 1, mvt II, mm 12-14.

This example once again shows the use of contrasting colors, via use of different instrument families. Vaughan Williams chooses to have the motive doubled by trombones, tuba and contrabassoon, even though the dynamic is only *ppp*. It is obviously not for projection that he does this, but for color. It is critical for the tuba blend into this texture and not dominate. The tubist needs to be aware that the texture changes subtly with each repetition. Sometimes the tuba is left out altogether as in measure 26 and measure 42. In measure 49 and 52 the tuba is scored with only the bassoons and bass clarinet.

Vaughan Williams creates and employs different groupings for tonal contrast in order to highlight thematic development and conflict between thematic ideas. This is visible in all the movements. One of the more notable moments is a large segment in Movement IV in measures 66-93. Various alternating groups of instruments beginning with brass and harps answered by
woodwinds and horns reflect the text, “wandering.” Thus, he puts the horns with the brass in measure 66 and with the woodwinds in measure 70. In measure 73 the tuba is added to the brass response and the horns are removed. The groupings are always changing slightly, but so distinct that they stand out. One oddity is in Movement III in measures 308-314, where the tuba and the bassoons are the sole bass sustaining instruments paired with the fanfare figure in the woodwinds and horns. It is interesting because the tuba, although doubled by the bassoons, becomes the dominant bass voice as seen in Example 1.11 below:

Example 1.11 Symphony No.1, mvt III, mm 308-314.

In addition to its use in providing structural color, it is important to note that the tuba part is filled with all manner of extremes. This is most likely to fulfill the delegated roles detailed in the preceding paragraphs. In range the tuba has a DD in Movement III in measure 251 and in Movement IV in measure 85. Notes as low as this can be found in the standard orchestral literature for tuba, but it is very rare. Beyond just these extreme low notes, extended passages in the low register at loud dynamics are found numerous times that require substantial endurance from the performer. In Movement IV the tuba sustains a fortissimo dynamic from measure 173-209 with almost no break. This same type of situation can be found in Movement I in measures
387-393. This time the tuba decrescendos form *fff* to *pp* in just one beat. In dynamics, the tuba covers the entire spectrum from *pppp* to *fff*. In Movement I in measure 359 the tuba crescendos to *fff* and suddenly diminuendos to *pp* in just one measure. The softest marking comes in Movement II in measure 47. The tuba is marked *pppp*. Vaughan Williams, however, did score these delicate passages in the most comfortable register for the tuba. One notable exception is in Movement II in measure 251. Here the tuba is asked to enter on DD in the piano dynamic followed by a dramatic crescendo to *fff*. This requires considerable skill on the part of the tubist.

Although there are no absolute tuba solos in the Symphony No. 1, it is clear that Vaughan Williams viewed the tuba as an important color in the orchestra and was well educated in its capabilities. Many of the parts are orchestrated in a manner that show that the tuba is intentionally the dominant sound. It also becomes clear that Vaughan Williams sees the tuba as a bridge instrument to the various instrumental families within the orchestra. The tuba functions with the woodwinds, brass, and strings separately and in just about every combination. The main goal of the tuba part is to help evoke specific images as related to the text, or to evoke broader pictures such as the motion of waves or the majesty of the sea. Many times that effort is linked with the brass section which also fulfills the loosely programmatic aspects of the Symphony No.1, whether it is to represent the majesty, calmness, or stormy qualities of the sea. The benefit of text in this symphony provides valuable clues as the roles specific instruments fulfill. The tuba could well have been left out of the softer sections of the symphony, but Vaughan Williams had a specific color in mind, one that often involves an expression of mood or emotion. These early glimpses of the importance of the tuba will be more fully realized in the later symphonies.
Chapter 2: Symphony No. 2

Symphony No. 2, written in 1913, carries the title “A London Symphony,” and was Vaughan Williams’ first large-scale work to feature the full symphony orchestra alone. It is dedicated to George Butterworth, who provided the initial inspiration to launch Vaughan Williams’ symphonic legacy.¹ Butterworth suggested that Vaughan Williams expand his vocabulary from vocal to symphonic compositions, but his influence was short lived. Like many of Vaughan Williams’ friends, Butterworth never returned from service in World War I.

The Symphony No 2 is in standard symphonic form with four movements, with one important exception. Added on to the end of the Symphony No.2 is an Epilogue, a quiet reflection to end the symphony. This becomes a distinctive part of Vaughan Williams style and is used numerous times in later symphonies. The form of each movement is as follows: Movement I – Sonata form, Movement II – Ternary, Movement III – Scherzo with two trio sections, Movement IV – Ternary + Epilogue. It is important to note that this symphony does not follow a specific program, but does evoke specific characteristics of London. The most recognizable is the quote of the Westminster Chimes which is heard in the introduction of Movement I. There is some conflict among scholars as to the term “program music” being applied to Vaughan Williams music, since Vaughan Williams himself has stated on numerous occasions that he did not compose with a specific program in mind; instead he attempted to be evocative and reflective of his subject matter. Part of Vaughan Williams popularity is no doubt because of his ability to

connect with the listener in ways that allows the visualization of places and a sense of a narrative in the music.

The tuba and trombones play a vital role in Vaughan Williams’ ability to connect with the listener as shown by their considerable rise in importance in Symphony no. 2. Vaughan Williams expands his palette of orchestral color and starts to explore the wide range of timbre and character that the low brass can express. These characteristics include, but are not limited to, violent outbursts, brassy muted sounds, soft and warm sounds, as well as a wide variety of articulations and dynamics. The technical demands placed on the tubist are also significantly increased as compared with Symphony no. 1. Most striking; however, is Vaughan Williams’ creative orchestration, with unusual combinations of instruments and sparse exposed textures. These orchestrational techniques diverge somewhat from his already established pattern of heavy orchestration and extensive use of doubling as seen in Symphony No.1. Even more timbral effects are achieved through both the use of mutes in both the string and brass families, although not the tuba. The use of stopped horn in Movement I, measures 72-74, and muted cornets in Movement I in measures 308-309 creates even more variety of sound effects. These orchestrational techniques help to elicit strong emotional responses from the listener.

This varied use of orchestral timbre is evident in the opening measures of Movement I. The strings are muted and marked at \textit{ppp}. The only other instruments to join, in measure 2, are muted horns and solo clarinet also at \textit{ppp}. The texture then returns to strings only from measures 8 to 18. Vaughan Williams employs his technique of using different “choirs” of sound within the orchestra- in this case, the string section. By incorporating a touch of color, with muted horns and clarinet, he sets the tone for this symphony. By measure 35 the tonal color has shifted to the woodwinds and the strings fade out all together. At this point he presents another “choir,” that of
the wind band. After a dramatic pause at the beginning of measure 38, the entire orchestra
explodes on the third beat with a *fff* chord, thus beginning the exposition of the sonata form.

Within this brief introduction, we can see the types of creativity in sound, dynamic, and even
silence that will be employed throughout the symphony. Each of these considerations will, in
turn, have relevance to the following discussion of Vaughan Williams’ writing for low brass
instruments.

It is important to note the unusual combinations of instruments in the Symphony No.2, even
though they are not specifically related to the tuba part. They show Vaughan Williams
searching to create new textures to achieve the desired emotional response. Sometimes this
means having only one instrument playing while the rest of orchestra is silent. Wind instruments,
in particular, are given meaningful solos. This will, indeed, affect the tuba player in later
symphonies.

These delicate solos are enhanced by the various instrumental colors that support them. In
Movement I in measures 235-236 the cellos are marked soli, followed by violin soli in measures
237-239, followed by a single harp line in measures 239-240. In Movement II, measures 4-8, the
English horn has a solo over muted strings that release in measure 6, leaving the English horn
completely exposed as a solo instrument. Vaughan Williams then makes the interesting decision
to have a variation of the wind band texture enter at measure 9, with the harp marked “solo,” as
seen in Example 2.1:
Example 2.1 Symphony No. 2, mvt II, mm 4-10.
Included in this group are the trombones and tuba, which function as a low brass section. Note, the double basses, with the *pizzicato* indication, function to punctuate the tuba line. This segment is a surprisingly delicate texture and creates a sound that is distinct to Vaughan Williams.

Not one to shy away from solo writing, Vaughan Williams is also not afraid to use winds and brass at the *ppp* dynamic. Movement III features a bassoon solo in measures 91-95 which then leads to a violin solo from measure 95-99 at *pp* dynamic, in which it is literally the only instrument playing. In measure 193-199 the only instruments playing are the muted cellos and solo bassoon. What Vaughan Williams has done so many times on a large scale with doubling, he does here on a very small scale, thereby creating a special color. In Movement IV in measures 163-164 the trombones are singled out very briefly as the dominant line, while the strings are marked *pp*. This is a unique way to make the transition into the *Lento* at measure 164, which ends the coda section of the form.

One way in which Vaughan Williams handles transitions is directly related to orchestration. This is a technique I call "layering." In addition to a *crescendo* or *decrescendo*, he adds or subtracts instruments to further enhance the dynamic effect. The most obvious example is in Movement IV from measures 223-232. The woodwinds build to the *f* brass entry at measure 225 and then diminuendo to *ppp*, handing the chord off to the muted string section. Not only does the string chord diminuendo, but the strings exit from high to low, starting with the violins, thus ending the symphony in a prolonged disappearing act shown in Example 2.2.
Example 2.2 Symphony No.2, mvt I, mm 227-231.

Something similar happens earlier in Movement IV, in measures 76-79. The two tenor trombones crescendo in measures 76-77 while the bass line of cellos and basses crescendos as well, but it is the entry of the bass trombone and tuba in octaves that propels the crescendo forward. In Movement III in measures 166-168 the tuba joins the basses and bassoons, but it is the addition of the bass trombone from measures 169-171 that gives impetus to the crescendo to its peak dynamic of ff. In Movement IV in measure 135 the tuba joins the bass line, already in progress, to add to the effect and impact of the orchestral crescendo. In Movement I this is seen in reverse in measures 35-37 as building from low to high instruments. The tuba and bass trombone lay the foundation with a sustained E, and then the brass enter imitatively beginning with horns, then trumpets, then trombones, and finally cornets. This build up from low to high is seen in its most extreme example in Movement I from measures 387-393. The tuba and bass trombone start in the pedal register on DD at fff dynamic. This is a challenge for the performers in itself, but the part continues for seven more measures, and continually rises in pitch and dynamic to the climax at the end of measure 393 at a ffff dynamic. In addition, the part is marked
marcato with tenuto markings. The other brass instruments follow this same pattern as they enter in order: bass trombone and tuba, cornets, trumpets, horns. To make the climax even more brilliant, the cymbal provides a fff crash in measure 393 as illustrated in Example 2.3 below.

Example 2.3 Symphony No.2, mvt I, mm 387-392.

These types of extreme dynamic markings are common throughout the symphony and in almost every section or the orchestra. One example of this technique in the string section is in Movement III, measures 104-113. Here the violins and violas are marked ff and marcato in addition to the added emphasis of fffz under each note.
The trombones and tuba show their ability to perform very fast crescendos and diminuendos in numerous instances including Movement I, measures 41-42, in which the trombones and tuba function as a low brass section to dramatically emerge from the texture very quickly. In just one beat they crescendo from $pp$ to $ff$. One of the most exaggerated moments of the trombones and tuba projecting out of the texture is in Movement I, measure 140 as seen in the Example 2.4 below.

![Example 2.4 Symphony No.2, mvt I, m 140.](image)

Although doubled with clarinet, bassoon, contra bassoon, cello, and bass, it is the low brass and cornet that make this figure effective. This effect can also be seen in Movement IV in measures, 23, 35, 43. In Movement IV, measure 161, the sudden crescendo takes enough precedence over the base motive that the tuba is grouped with the trombones and not with the bass clarinet, bassoons, and timpani as it was in previous statements as seen in the Example 2.5 below:
The more typical form of this motive has the tuba doubling the eighth-note pattern as seen in example 2.5. The tuba and trombones are used bolster the dynamic impact of the orchestra in many sections, such as in Movement I, measures 38-52, 133-151, 155-157,162-181, 371-373, 377-381, 387-393, and 401-407 and in Movement IV in measures 1-70, 65-83, 95-101, 132-136,1and 42-158. In each of these sections the dynamic marking is a least $f$.

Perhaps more interesting is Vaughan Williams use of low brass in more varied ways than just generators of volume. The tuba does continue its role to bolster the bass line, but it is now included in important motivic statements. One of these motives is first seen in Movement I in measures 44-45 as seen in Example 2.6 below.
Example 2.6 Symphony No.2, mvt I, mm 44-45.

The tuba is the dominant voice each time this motive appears, even though the orchestration varies slightly with each statement. This motive is heard again in Movement I in measures 46-47, 50, 52, 60-63, and 172.

The trombones and tuba also get to share in the melodic development of the Symphony No.2. This is first seen in Movement I from measures 65-67, in which the trombones are the only vehicle in the orchestra for the melody. One of the most prominent melodic statements occurs in Movement I. The first is in measures 133-137 as seen in the Example 2.7 below.

Example 2.7 Symphony No. 2, mvt I, mm 133-137.

Although this melody is extensively doubled, it is the tuba and trombone that are most prominent. The tuba and trombone start in octaves and eventually split apart at measure 139,
with the tuba and bass trombone becoming part of the bass line instead of the melody, only to rejoin the melody again at measure 145. There is a melodic fragment of the same melody stated in the trombones and tuba in measures 155-157. This time it is stated by the tuba and trombones only and marked “solo” in the parts. The same figure is repeated in measures 371-373 and marked “soli.” In measures 162-166 the trombones and tuba share in another melodic statement with bass clarinet, bassoons, contra bassoon, horns, cellos, and basses, and are joined in measure 162 by trumpets and cornets. The melodic line is shown in the Example 2.8 below:

Example 2.8 Symphony No.2, mvt I, mm 162-166.

This same melodic statement is repeated later in Movement I in measures 387-393, but in a different key signifying the beginning of the Coda. The trombones and tuba are given yet another theme, measures 377-381, which the woodwinds introduced first in measure 121. This is played in unison and marked “soli,” as seen in the Example 2.9 below.

Example 2.9 Symphony No. 2, mvt I, mm 377-381.
The bass trombone and tuba have an unusually prominent moment in which they are the main melodic voice doubled with viola, cello, and bass in Movement III, measures 297-403.

The trombone section also gets a few additional isolated melodic moments. In Movement III in measures 181-185 the trombones are marked “soli” and have a counter line under the violin melody. In Movement IV in measures 91-93 the trombones are marked “solo” with the melody. Again in Movement IV, measures 53-54 and 132-136, the trombones are given the melody and marked “soli,” while the tuba is part of the bass line. The trombones are also given “soli” moments that sound very reminiscent of Gustav Holst orchestration style in Movement IV in measures 177-178 and 181-182.

Vaughan Williams still isolates the wind band from the orchestra in Symphony No.2 as he had done in Symphony No.1. This alternation of color between strings, woodwinds, and brass is seen in Movement I, measures 117-118, in Example 2.10.
Example 2.10 Symphony No. 2, mvt I, mm 115-119.
The tuba fulfills a critical role as the most resonant bass instrument, once again paired with the low reed instruments. The same effect is used in measures 311-313, but this time only the brass section is used, with the strings and woodwinds alternating with the brass choir entrance at measures 316-318. What makes this instrumental alternation even more effective is the fact that it is all in a pp dynamic. This whole section from measures 311-319 is an echo of the first statement in the Exposition. The tuba is put in a particularly low register to begin the chorale in measure 316. This dramatic shift in register really draws attention to the tuba. The brass section is featured one last time in measures 401-403 with this same motive. More attention is drawn to these moments not only because there is a color shift, but also a tempo shift. In measure 394 the tempo is marked animato and then suddenly molto allargando. Even the articulations contrast. The woodwinds, prior to the brass entrance, are marked staccato in contrast to the brass which are marked tenuto.

The orchestration of Movement II contrasts the wind band color with the strings in a slightly different manner. In measures 90-98 and again in measures 108-119 the woodwind and brass are used as sustaining sounds in contrast to the fast moving strings. They are in essence functioning as two separate entities with the low instrument group of bassoons, bass trombone, tuba and basses forming a bridge between the two.

The wind band is featured only once in Movement III, from measures 302 to 307. In this case it alternates between tutti orchestral sections. In Movement IV the wind band alternates with strings in measures 36-43 and then joins together in measures 43-54. The wind band is featured for the first time as a virtuoso ensemble in measures 65-68. The tuba and bass trombone are in octaves, but with moving eighth notes.
Throughout the symphony the relationship of the trombones to the tuba is fluid. Sometimes the trombones and tuba function as a unit or “section,” sometimes in octaves with the melody. In general, throughout the first two symphonies the tenor trombones are grouped with higher-timbre instruments and the bass trombone and tuba are grouped with lower-timbre instruments. Noticeable differences occur with the melodic statements. In these instances the low brass function together. This can be seen in Movement I in measures 133-137, 155-157, and 371. In Movement IV in measures 132-136, 138-139, and 142-146 the trombones function as a unit while the tuba is with the basses. It is interesting that the bass trombone is not with the low instrument group at measure 150-157 of Movement IV. Normally when the tuba is in the extreme low range the bass trombone is in octaves to bolster the sound.

In fact Vaughan Williams used these subtle variations in the grouping of low instruments when doubling. In the Symphony No.2 he starts to include the horn in this group. This is seen in Movement I in measures 44-48 and in Movement III in measures 297-302 as seen in Example 2.11:
Example 2.11 Symphony No. 2, mvt III, mm 297-301.

There are also subtle variations in octaves for the tuba. Sometimes he displaces the tuba octave from the basses. This happens in Movement I in measures 138-140 and 151, where the tuba sounds one octave lower. The most unique variation can be found in the Epilogue of Movement IV (measures 173-end). The bass line is constantly changing, yet it is so subtle that it is almost not audible. For example, when the tuba drops out in measure 188, the basses enter, but the bassoons continue and the fourth horn enters. Because of the ppp dynamic this change is almost imperceptible. As far as the listener is concerned the tuba could still be playing. Then in measure 191, the basses drop out, but the tuba enters and continues with the horns.

For the tubist, the Symphony No. 2 has some challenging performance issues. Movement I is full of these moments. The motive in measure 45, as seen in Example 2.6 on page 33, is quite fast and is tricky to articulate at the speed usually taken. The sudden swell to ff in the middle is problematic because in trying to achieve the goal of a loud dynamic, clarity can be lost. The soli
in measures 377-381 with the trombones, as seen in example 2.9 on page 35, is difficult because of the range and dynamic. The performer must resist the urge to play too loudly. By purposely trying to dominate over the trombone, poor accuracy may result. The three trombones provide the bulk of the volume, the tuba in this register will automatically sound powerful. The tubist needs to be aware of measure 166 in which there is a large leap of over an octave at fff dynamic levels. The passage from measures 172-183 requires clarity as well as power. There are also issues of endurance too. In measures 388-394 the tubist must take frequent short breaths in order to maintain a fff dynamic and have sustained notes with strong attacks. To complicate matters the tuba enters on pedal DD. This note can be difficult to center in the best of times, but to have a strong attack and at a fff dynamic makes it particularly challenging. In Movement III from measures 297-302 the passage comes up quickly and the tubist must not only be ready, but not drag. Movement IV has many passages for the performer to be aware of. From measure 1 to 10, the tubist must take care to leave room to crescendo. In measure 6 the tuba, bass, and bassoons are the only instruments that change pitch on the down beat. The slurs from measure 7-10 are technically impossible at a ff dynamic as seen in Example 2.12.

Example 2.12 Symphony No. 2, mvt IV, mm 7-10.

Very short breaths between notes, followed by legato articulation will be more effective than leaving an occasional gaping hole in the sound. The slurred string parts in octaves doubling will cover those tiny spaces for breaths.
It is most important for the tubist to have knowledge of when the tuba is part of a brass ensemble texture or wind band texture, because in these cases the tuba is the bass voice. The sudden changes of color will catch the performer by surprise if not prepared. In Movement IV from measures 185 to 193 the texture is so thin and soft that the tuba entrances will feel particularly precarious. Vaughan Williams does provide some warning by marking “solo” in the part at measure 185.

Although the tuba is still a dependent instrument in terms of melody in the Symphony No.2, it is a much more integrated and important part of all aspects of the symphony than it was in Symphony No. 1. It no longer just supports the bass line, but shares in melodic statements and fragments, as well as other important motivic material and is highlighted in effects that jump out of the orchestral texture. Throughout the writing and orchestration of the second symphony, there is a definite sense that low brass are becoming an increasingly important component of Vaughan Williams symphonic vocabulary.
Chapter 3: Symphony No. 3

Symphony No. 3, written in 1921, is Vaughan Williams most introspective symphony and was given the title “pastoral” by the composer. The Symphony is in four movements with the following forms: Movement I- Sonata Form, Movement II- Ternary Form, Movement III - Scherzo with repeated trio, Movement IV- Sonata Form. Vaughan Williams received pointed criticism of the symphony as being too homogenous and essentially all one style and tone, without even a fast movement for contrast. Because of this lack of contrast, this symphony stands out as the biggest break from traditional symphonic form out of all of his symphonies. In addition, his extensive use of modes causes the symphony to deviate from standard harmonic progressions. Although scored for a large orchestra, the *tutti* orchestra is rarely used in Symphony No. 3. As in the Symphony No. 2, Vaughan Williams continues to experiment with various colors, including the addition of a solo voice (soprano or tenor) and many individual solos for the wind and brass instruments. One of the more poignant moments is in Movement II from measures 69-76, where the trumpet is given an extended solo with only strings sustaining under it. The tuba, however, is used very sparingly. In fact, it is *tacet* for the first two movements, and given very little to perform in the last movement. Although one may wonder what the intended use of the tuba was in this symphony, a stylistic and textural analysis reveals that the tuba, as in previously described instances in Symphonies No. 1 and No. 2, is used as a sound “anchor” and for the addition of depth to the ensemble.
Many of the qualities of Vaughan Williams orchestration still apply to this symphony, but in an understated way. The tuba still reaches down to a pedal DD in measure 42 of Movement III, and is always grouped with bassoons, bass trombone, and basses. The tuba is rarely given any melodic material. For instance, in measures 20-23 in Movement III, the tuba could easily have doubled the melodic material of the bass clarinet, bassoons, bass trombone, viola, cello, and basses, but instead enters only midway through the measure as support for the crescendo as shown in Example 3.1 below:

Example 3.1 Symphony No.3, mvt III, mm 20-24.

There are a couple of notable exceptions to this rule. In measure 122 of Movement III, the trombones and tuba enter, imitating the melodic material of the woodwind and horn entrance in measure 120. In measure 125, the tuba shifts to double melodic material with the other bass instruments as seen in Example 3.2.
Example 3.2 Symphony No. 3, mvt III, mm 125-127.

Another characteristic feature that can also be found in this symphony is the use of the wind band texture. The wind band is brought to the fore in Movement III, measures 154-155, in typical fashion, with a bit of layering, when the tuba joins the other bass instruments in measure 153 to propel the orchestra to the peak dynamic at measure 154 as seen in Example 3.3.
Example 3.3 Symphony No. 3, mvt III, mm 153-154.
In Movement IV there is evidence of the use of wind band in alternation with string orchestra in measures 6-32. In measure 32 the two groups merge together; in this instance, the low brass function only to add a slightly different color to the bass instruments as evidenced by the difference in dynamic marking between the woodwinds and low brass. In bars 28-29 the woodwinds are marked *F decrescendo to p*, while the low brass are marked *pp* with a slight swell to *p*. This happens again in measures 46-47, where the woodwinds crescendo to *f* while the low brass crescendo to *p*.

The trombones are given a chorale type theme briefly in Movement IV in measures 64-65 and 75-76, but in both instances there is no tuba with them. The very last time the trombones have this theme in measures 118-120, the tuba does join at the very end, but only to give color to the bassoons and clarinet. The last statement of the brass is in measures 148-149, with the dark and rich sound of horns, trombones, and the tuba. At this point the tuba is the only bass voice in the low octave and provides the critical sound needed to blend with the other brass instruments as shown in Example 3.4 below:

Example 3.4  Symphony No. 3, mvt IV, mm 148-149.
The minimal use of tuba found in the Symphony No. 3 will not be found in any of the remaining Vaughan Williams symphonies. Of his later symphonies, Vaughan Williams would choose not to orchestrate the Symphony No. 5 and Symphony No. 8 with a tuba part. The Symphony No. 5 shares much of the same character as Symphony No. 3, and also the same doubling of low instruments. Perhaps Vaughan Williams realized that much of the same effect could be realized without the tuba. By substituting low horns and/or bass trombone along with the basses a similar result is achieved, especially at lower dynamic levels.
Chapter 4: Symphony No. 4

The Symphony No. 4, written 1931-34, over a decade after Symphony No. 3, is the first of Vaughan Williams symphonies that does not carry a programmatic title. It consists of four movements, each with the following form: Movement I- Sonata form, Movement II- Sonata form, Movement III- Scherzo and trio, Movement IV- Sonata form and Epilogue. The violent tone of this symphony diverges radically from the previous three symphonies and there is a noticeable increase in chromaticism.

The Symphony No. 4 also represents a dramatic leap in the significance of the low brass instruments, as both the trombones and tuba ascend to a status of equal melodic importance with the other orchestral instruments, rather than being primarily used for harmonic or foundational support; just the shear amount of notes for the tuba and trombones is indicative of the increased importance of the low brass sonority in this score. Perhaps this is because of the violent nature of this symphony. This violent and combatitive style is very different from the previous three symphonies and is the polar opposite of the Symphony No.3. There were glimpses of aggression in the first two symphonies, but nothing like the sustained dissonance and volume presented in the Symphony No.4. Vaughan Williams even uses a new indication, “feroce,” in Movement IV at measure 448. Throughout the work, the low brass functions as a critical element in presenting the thematic material. The way Vaughan Williams handles the interaction of thematic material within the orchestra is also much more complex, particularly in regards to rhythm. The use of hemiola is interwoven though the entire symphony. The violin melody in Movement II in
measures 44-49 shows that solo lines have added rhythmic complexity as well as complex interaction with the cello line as seen in Example 4.1 below:

![Example 4.1 Symphony No.4, mvt II, mm 44-49.](image)

Even the interaction between the trombones and tuba themselves is more varied and complex than in Vaughan Williams three previous symphonies. The use of extremes continues, as well as the continued exploration of new instrumental sonorities. For instance, the tuba is asked to use a mute for the first time in a Vaughan Williams symphony. In addition, the tubist is faced with many technically challenging parts in the Symphony No. 4. The low brass also have important harmonic material. When the trombones and tuba function as section, there are times when the chord voicing is unusual or there are strange intervals between individual parts. The performer needs to be constantly aware of the frequent key changes and always changing accidentals, because of the chromatic nature of the thematic material. Vaughan Williams also uses constantly changing time signatures and mixed meters in this symphony.

The very opening of the Symphony No. 4 demonstrates Vaughan Williams’ proclivity for suggesting violence in this composition, as well as the role of orchestration in the structure of the work. It as if there is a large scale battle within the orchestra between different instrument groups formed of primarily “high” versus “low” sonorities in a fight for dominance. The main theme is first stated in the flutes, piccolo, clarinets, trumpet, and violins and answered in measure 2 by English horn, bass clarinet, bassoons, contra bassoon, horns, trombones, tuba, violas, cellos,
and basses. The trombones and tuba, in powerful octaves, form the primary voice for the low forces in opening measures, and indeed, throughout the entire symphony. Already in measure 8 of Movement I, the duple figure begins, followed by the syncopated entry of the flutes, oboes, clarinets, and horns in measure 9. The main opening theme returns in measures 19-20, but this time presented first in the low voices, but with subtle changes. It is as if individual parts within the orchestra can not decide with which group they belong. In measure 19-20, the violas and cellos defect to the high group. A fast and violent fight breaks out in measures 28-31 in which the composite rhythm is continuous quarter notes, but each group fractures into smaller groups with different rhythms until the old group of high versus low come together again in measures 30-31. The low group sounds a final outburst before a sudden break in sound in measure 32. The high group gets the last outburst in measure 48, when this same idea returns. Ultimately this battle is not resolved until the final bars of the symphony. In measure 453 of Movement IV, the opening theme returns and the high and low resume their battle with the low group winning out in the end. Even though there is an orchestral tutti, all of the high instruments are put into the low register and the flutes and piccolo are left out altogether.

It is clear from this brief narrative that it is easy to create a programmatic narrative to this symphony. Although Vaughan Williams did not provide an official program, many have done so. However one feels about this, it is a tribute to the music making of Vaughan Williams that his music speaks so directly to so many different people. No doubt, much of the effectiveness and impact of the Symphony No. 4 is because of orchestration.

Vaughan Williams’ technique of isolating the sonority of the wind band and the brass section continues in the Symphony No.4, although it is mostly just the brass section that receives such treatment. The first example is in Movement I, measures 14-16, in which only the brass are
separated out. This is even more dramatic because of the small group of only six brass players is contrasted against the full woodwinds, strings and horn sections. The use of isolation of the brass sonority in this instance seems to serve mainly to surprise or confuse the listeners, so that they have no idea what sounds are coming next. In addition, the tuba suddenly drops into the low register and the tempo sounds faster because of the switch to half note values. In Movement II, measures 1-3, his use is completely different. The brass section is featured, but all muted, including the tuba. This is the first time Vaughan Williams calls for the use of a tuba mute in his symphonies. This strange sound is used to start Movement II as seen in Example 4.2 below. Perhaps this is a part of the effort to keep the listener on edge, or maybe it just provides a more gentle transition from the ppp strings at the end of Movement I.
Example 4.2 Symphony No. 4, mvt II, mm 1-4.

Vaughan Williams enhances his dramatic contrasts in the Symphony No. 4 even further by changing key, meter and tempo as well instrumental sonorities. One instance of this is in measure 105-113 of Movement IV in which the brass are sandwiched between *tutti* sections of the orchestra as seen in Example 4.3 below.
Example 4.3 Symphony No 4, mvt IV, mm 105-113.

Note that there are three meter changes in close proximity, in addition to the three different keys. The accents in the orchestra that mark measures 94-105, lead up to the brass
entrance, facilitate the smooth transition into a triple meter, just as the triplets in measure 113 help the transition back to duple meter. The more normal form of this alternation is seen in Movement III in measures 30-33 in which the brass section is placed between the tutti orchestra with no meter changes or key changes. This is repeated identically in measures 122-132 and 243-253.

Vaughan Williams also continues to experiment with instrumentation between the contrasting groups within the fourth movement as well. In Movement IV in measures 189-190, the lower spectrum of the brass section is featured with horns, trombones, and tuba. This is reminiscent of the grouping first found in Symphony No. 3 in Movement IV in measures 148-149 as seen in Example 3.4 on page 46. In addition to this timbre change, there is a change in key, tempo, and dynamic. Unlike in Symphony No. 3, the low brass group this time has a dark and ominous quality. The strange voicing adds to the dark foreshadowing of the final return of this motive. The tuba is in the low octave and all three trombones are unison one octave higher in the low range of the instrument at a ppp dynamic can be seen in Example 4.4 below:

Example 4.4 Symphony No. 4, mvt IV, mm 189-191.
Yet another variation of this brass grouping is found at measures 214-216 of Movement IV. Here the entire brass section emphatically states the same motive that starts Movement IV. This time the contrast is heightened not only by the rude interruption of the brass, but also by the halting of forward motion with a fermata in measure 215. So Vaughan Williams makes it clear that there is not only a battle of instrumentation happening, but also a battle for thematic dominance. The tuba and trombones are quite often at the center of this conflict as can be seen in Example 4.5 below:
Example 4.5 Symphony No. 4, mvt IV, mm 213-215.
As described earlier, the low brass are the primary voice of the low group of instruments which are given the first motive of Movement I in measures 2-6 as seen in Example 4.6 below:

![Example 4.6 Symphony No. 4, mvt I, mm 2-6.](image)

In this example the trombones are put in octaves for maximum projection capabilities. In terms of orchestral writing, there is no wind or string instrument that can project louder than this combination. When tuba is written in the extreme low register at a $ff$ dynamic, as in measure 20 of Movement I, it also adds a very menacing sound quality.

The trombones have the statement of the main motive that runs throughout the entire symphony, in measure 7-8 of Movement I as seen in the Example 4.7 below:

![Example 4.7 Symphony No.4, mvt I, mm 7-8.](image)

In this first statement the tenor trombones are in unison in the midrange, again for maximum projection, and remain unison until measure 43. The return of the first motive in measures 123-126 is different in that the only the tuba and horns join the bass clarinet, bassoons, cellos and basses in this statement, in essence, a weaker statement. The trombones function as harmonic filler at that point. In Movement II in measures 131-135 the trombones function in a dual melodic and harmonic role as illustrated in Example 4.8 below:
Example 4.8  Symphony No. 4, mvt II, mm 131-135.

The bass trombone is the most audible statement of the motive because it is separated by over an octave from the tenors. Harmonically, in measure 131, the trombones are a condensed representation of the opening sonority in the very first measure of the Symphony No. 4, with a minor ninth interval. Example 4.9 also shows Vaughan Williams’ ever-present search for unusual orchestration, with the combination of flute and muted trombones.

The trombones and tuba present a similar statement of the motive in Movement III, in measures 96-100, in yet another key and time signature. This time, though, they are all in parallel motion as seen below in Example 4.9:

Example 4.9  Symphony No.4, mvt III, mm 96-100.

The next time this motive is heard again in the low brass is in Movement IV, measure 200 with the trombone section at pp answered by the bass trombone and tuba in measure 205 in a slightly compressed version. The most dramatic statement comes in measure 309-322 of Movement IV. This time the trombones are the only instruments playing and they are in unison. By putting the
bass trombone in the high register, Vaughan Williams evokes an even more brutal quality at the marked *ff* dynamic as seen in Example 4.10 below:

Example 4.10 Symphony No. 4, mvt IV, mm 309-322.

The tuba has this same motive imbedded in the bass line in Movement IV in measures 365-366. The bass trombone has it in measures 385-388, and then the bass trombone and tuba together state the motive in measures 398-399 in octaves.

In one of the more exciting moments of the symphony, the motive is forced apart and its fragments repeated over and over again creating a constant composite rhythm of continuous quarter notes beginning in measure 409. What makes it so exciting is not only that the ostinato pattern is fast (marked *con anima* from 309-453), but that it is switching between different groups within the orchestra at lightning speed. The effect is one of controlled chaos. The speed of switching between parts can even be seen in the low brass parts as shown in example 4.11 below:

Example 4.11 Symphony No. 4, mvt IV, mm 420-427.
The pattern of continuous quarter notes finally ends in measure 433 when the low instruments, with the trombones and tuba the most prominent, present an extremely augmented, statement of the motive, at double the previous note length. Once again, Vaughan Williams creates extreme contrast by changing meter, key signature, dynamic, and orchestration. Vaughan Williams sustains the intensity within these closing moments of the symphony with the low brass marked $fff$ and the additional indication of $senza diminuendo$.

The low brass share in other melodic moments in addition to the main motive. The tuba has a brief tuneful solo with the bass clarinet, bassoons, and basses in Movement I in measures 81-84. One of the longer solos in the symphonies, up to this point in their chronology of composition, is found in Movement I from measures 73-80. This solo offers the first glimpse that Vaughan Williams sees the lyrical potential in the tuba. It also shows his knowledge of the tuba’s capabilities by the placement of the solo is in the mid to high register while covering a dynamic range of $pp$ to $ff$, as seen in Example 4.12 below:

![Example 4.12 Symphony No. 4, mvt I, mm 74-80.](image)

This theme returns with the tuba and bass trombone in octaves, in measures 200-207, weaving in and out of the bass line.

The tuba, this time with only the bassoons, is featured with important melodic material in Movement III when it starts a fugue (exposition, the head of the subject), marked “solo,” in measure 149. Once again, the contrast is heightened by a change in meter, key, tempo and orchestration as seen in Example 4.13 below:
Example 4.13 Symphony No. 4, mvt III, mm 148-157.

A heavy, *pesante*, statement of this melody occurs in measure 196-202, with the bass trombone and tuba doubled in octaves in the low register. The tuba continues with fragments of this melody from 208-214. Another heavy statement of this theme is from measures 271-274, this time contrasted by meter change, orchestration, and an implied key change. Just as Vaughan Williams employed fugal counterpoint in Movement I, here, the theme is then repeated canonically from lowest to highest instruments at the octave.

In the very first measures of Movement IV, the high woodwinds and violins state the main theme of this movement. The trombones and tuba state this theme several times throughout the movement with each statement scored in the same manner with the two tenor trombones in unison and the bass trombone and tuba in unison as seen in measures 52-56 and 441-444. The first time the low brass have the theme, in measures 16-19, there is a slight variation in that the bass trombone is put in octaves with the tuba instead of unison as seen in Example 4.14 below:
The tuba is put in the solo role again in measures 90-94 of Movement IV as it is given the fourth entrance of the canon, doubled only by cellos and basses, with the same theme as seen in Example 4.15. Later, this theme is seen with the trombones and tuba doubling in measures 257-265 as seen in Example 4.15 below:

This example highlights two more aspects of the low brass writing that has grown considerably in the Symphony No. 4, the independence of parts and increased use of harmony within the low brass section. In Movement IV, measures 257-265, the contrast between single line doubling of the string parts and harmonic writing in the brass parts is clearly evident. The low brass share in the dissonance that is presented in the opening measures of Movement I. Although the low brass are in octaves in this first statement as seen in Example 4.6 on page 57, they share in the harmonic importance in measures 179-188 as seen in Example 4.16 below:
Example 4.16 Symphony No. 4, mvt I, mm 179-188.

This example also shows the emancipation of individual parts as the low brass become divided in measure 184 into two groups with counter rhythms with the tenor trombones versus the bass trombone and tuba.

In Movement IV in measures 453-464 the low brass function as a section, that is they play in rhythm together in a succession of block chords. The dissonance is pronounced by the interval of ninth between the bass trombone and tuba in measure 454 in Example 4.17 below:
Example 4.17 Symphony No. 4, mvt IV, mm 453-464.

Also in this example, the trombones and tuba continue in measures 457-459 with powerful chords, always changing quality with each instrument in the low brass section on a different note without doubling. However, doubling is still prominent throughout the symphony, only taking on changed forms as compared with the first three symphonies because of the greater independence of parts. In measures 113-116 of Movement I the three trombones function as the only instruments in the orchestra to have the theme, while the tuba doubles the strings. The bass trombone can pivot between the tenor trombones and the tuba part, while the tuba part, in turn, can be free from the trombones altogether as seen in measures 90-94 in Movement IV. In Movement IV in measures 127-132 the bass trombone and tuba sustain tied-over half notes while the rest of the orchestra has continuous eighth notes. This is the first instance in his symphonies that Vaughan Williams does not have the low brass doubled with any other instrument in the orchestra, taking full advantage of the low brass sound alone.
Another feature that emerges is the “trading-off” of parts within the low brass section. This occurs first in Movement I, measures 43-44. What is particularly revealing is that the low brass parts trade off, yet the cello and bass parts do not, can be seen in Example 4.18 below:

Example 4.18 Symphony No. 4, mvt I, mm 43-44.

This same pattern of trade-off is seen in Movement III, measures 136-143, 208-214, and 264-270. In Movement IV can be seen in measures 73-77, 290-294, 367-368, and 420-427.

The low brass share in the character of the symphony, even without melodic material. The most obvious instance of this is first seen in Movement IV in measures 5-15 in which the tubas and trombones join with the low winds and strings in a sardonic march. This “oom-pah” figure constantly interjects itself into Movement IV and is vital part of the mannerisms of Vaughan Williams style. This cynical and almost satiric type of March will weave its way into many of Vaughan Williams’ compositions.

The tuba, obviously, is a vital part of any march-like statement, but Vaughan Williams has made sure in the Symphony No. 4 that the tuba shares equally in the expression of themes and character. There is a marked increase in the frequency of thematic material in the tuba. Whether it is thematic or non-thematic, the rhythmic and technical difficulties are also increased.
In the thematic material there are often octave leaps as can be seen in Example 4.17 on page 64. These leaps are also found in Movement I in measures 3-4, 19-20, 180-181. Much of the melodic material is at a ff dynamic level, which can test the levels of endurance for the performer. A prominent example is in Movement IV from measures 433-448 which is marked fff and senza diminuendo with the addition of marcato in measure 441; and if that were not enough, it is marked feroce in measure 448. The use of low register at loud dynamics can also prove challenging. Many of the tuba entrances start on low notes, which are harder to project by their very nature. Although there are no pedal DDs in this symphony, there are plenty of low FFs and a couple of low EE flats, as in Movement III in measures 196 and 271, and an EE in Movement IV in measure 114, 127 and 152. In a few instances the tuba’s lyrical quality reaches up into the upper range such as Movement III in measures 149-157. The high d flat in this passage represents the highest note that Vaughan Williams has scored for the tuba in the first four symphonies. The passage in Movement I in measures 74-80, the tuba is in the high range in a lyrical manner as seen in Example 4.12 on page 60.

Another noticeable change in Vaughan Williams’ writing for the tuba is the difficulty of increased fast technical passages. This is seen in several places in Movement III, the first being measures 37-40. This passage is not only fast, but has the added challenge of accent placement as seen in Example 4.19 below:

Example 4.19 Symphony No.4, mvt III, mm 37-39.
This figure repeats in measures 129-132, and 250-353. The example in measures 129-132 leads into another technically difficult part in measures 136-143. In measures 205-207 the tuba is given a rapid eighth note pattern with the Bass clarinet, bassoons and cellos. The most extended technical passage can be found in measures 259-270 as seen in Example 4.20 below:

Example 4.20 Symphony No. 4, mvt III, mm 259-270.

In Movement IV in measures 290-294 the tuba is given the following brief, but awkward, interchange with the bass trombone as seen in Example 4.21 below:

Example 4.21 Symphony No. 4, mvt IV, mm 290-294.
The tuba shares a couple additional brief technically challenging moments in Movement IV, measures 411-413 and 449-450. Although many of these technical parts are brief, they signal the beginning of Vaughan Williams awareness of the capabilities of the tuba.

The Symphony No 4 is a masterwork in every sense of the word. Part of its genius is the incorporation of all the orchestral instruments scored for, in this massive symphony, in the thematic and harmonic structure of the composition. The tuba and trombones benefit the most. Even though still doubled with other instruments, they are often scored with the technically challenging woodwind and string parts, instead of just filling the role of bass support. The low brass still do function at times as the bass line support, but it is evident that Vaughan Williams is continuing to grow and build upon his already established patterns of orchestration to make an even more compelling orchestral composition.
Chapter 5: Symphony No. 6

The Symphony No. 6, composed from 1944 to 1947, presents a return to the violence of Symphony No. 4, after the transcendent and peaceful Symphony no. 5. The symphony is in four movements with the last movement carrying the title “Epilogue.” Each movement is in a distinctive form: Movement I- Sonatine, Movement II- Ternary, III- Scherzo with repeated trio, IV- Free form-sectional. It is the Epilogue that receives special attention from scholars because of its deviation from standard form and its extra-musical associations, which have been described as “the spiritual consequences of War.”

Although the tuba continues its prominent role in the Symphony No. 6, it is not as thoroughly integrated thematically as in the Symphony No. 4. Vaughan Williams continues to experiment with new colors and combinations within the orchestra, expanding his instrumental palette in this work to include the tenor saxophone and the xylophone. Both these newcomers are treated as more soloistically than the tuba. Vaughan Williams also continues the violent mood that was so prominent in Symphony No.4. Symphony No. 6, composed over a decade later than the Symphony No. 4, has been also likened to war by numerous critics, although Vaughan Williams insists that he had no specific program in mind. Because of the violent nature of war, the brass are in front lines representing all things brutal by contributing to ff statements of thematic material with jabbing accents and staccato punctuations. The tuba still adds its distinctive color, but also shares in the thematic material, particularly in Movement III, and is a

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2 Schwartz, The Symphonies of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 117.
key player in the satirical march-like sections throughout the symphony, but is *tacet* in
Movement IV. The tuba part is not as extensive as in Symphony No. 4, but still retains a
prominent role in the development of thematic material; in fact, the material presented in
Symphony No. 6 represents a significant advancement in the technical difficulty of the tuba part.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Movement III in measures 126-142 (see Example 5.1 below). Particularly revealing is the scoring which Vaughan Williams uses. For the first time
Vaughan Williams scores the tuba with the high woodwinds, horns, and trumpets. Perhaps this
can be seen as a fundamental shift in approach to the role of the tuba, since Vaughan Williams
traditionally regards these other instruments as melodic instruments. To achieve the right
balance, the tuba is put in the upper register. That, combined with the fast tempo and rapid
intervallic leaps provides ample challenges for the tubist. In addition, the dynamic marking of *ff*
and the use of slurs complicates the breathing aspects for the performer. Vaughan Williams truly
shows his total grasp of the tubas capabilities with a passage like this one.

![Example 5.1 Symphony No. 6, mvt III, mm 126-142.](image)

The same theme, as seen in example 5.1 on page 70, returns in augmentation in the low
brass in Movement II in measures 307-318. This time it is presented as a large scale orchestral
statement with very extensive doubling. The tuba is brought back into the low range to
accentuate the heavy nature of the augmented statement. This augmented version is also unique
in that there is no doubling within the trombones and tuba. Each part is on a different note and continues on in parallel motion, creating a dense texture and strange orchestral sonority as seen in Example 5.2 below:

**Example 5.2** Symphony No. 6, mvt III, mm 307-318.

There are still abundant examples of Vaughan Williams’ more common orchestration of octave doubling of low brass in statements of thematic material. In Movement III the main theme is presented first by the bass trombone and tuba accompanied by the bassoons and basses as seen in Example 5.3 below:

**Example 5.3** Symphony No. 6, mvt III, mm 1-5.

This theme returns in the low brass with slight differences in measures 20-24, 91-95, 166-167, 193-201, 209, 211, 255-259, and 269.

The low brass also participate one of the other principal themes in Movement III in measures 35-36, 52-55, 58, 60, 62, 64-73, 193-201, 209-211, 220-222. The longest statement of this theme may be seen in measures 64-71: (Example 5.4 below)
Example 5.4 Symphony No. 6, mvt III, mm 64-71.

This example also highlights the pitting of high instruments versus low instruments, with tenor sax aiding the high instruments. The pitting of contrasting instrumental colors against each other lends credence to the suggestion that Symphony No. 6 represents a kind of combat narrative. This idea of high instruments versus low instruments is set up in the first bars of Movement III, as the low brass start the main theme and it is answered imitatively by high pitched instruments. When the opening theme reaches the highest instruments, a new theme is introduced in the woodwinds in measure 8 as seen in Example 5.5:
Example 5.5  Symphony No. 6, mvt III, mm 1-10.

This fast agitated theme is always presented in the high instruments and is in direct contrast with ponderous and heavy low instrument theme. The one exception to this in Movement III, measures 299-306, where the tuba shares a fragment of the woodwind theme with the celli, basses, bassoons, and the tenor saxophone as seen in Example 5.6 below:
Example 5.6 Symphony No. 6, mvt III, mm 299-306.

It is a perfect example of the themes fighting it out, along with some reversal of roles. It is as if the theme is jumping around the orchestra trying to find which instrument group will give it victory over the other. Another possible idea is that the bass statement of the high woodwind theme is sarcasm. Whatever the rationale, everything comes to a sudden halt, as Vaughan Williams uses the power of total silence in measure 306. The orchestra then joins in a tutti
statement of the theme, not an affirmation of unity, but a somehow twisted version in which the densely orchestrated parallel motion sounds ominous as well as monotonous, almost like a forced march. To show just how insincere this unity is, it shortly thereafter begins to fall apart, with the flutes and piccolo starting and then joined by the violins, violas, English horn, and clarinets in measure 329. By measure 331 the low instruments break away and the whole orchestra fragments and diminishes to nothing, ending the movement with the solo bass clarinet.

The bass clarinet is curiously left out of the first two movements. Otherwise, the typical low grouping of bassoons, trombones, tuba, and basses joined by the horns in Movement I, measures 12-14, state one of the main themes of the movement. This theme is also presented as high instruments versus low instruments. The high instruments have a running sixteenth note pattern against the heavy low brass dominated theme as seen in Example 5.7 below:

![Example 5.7 Symphony No. 6, mvt I, mm 12-14.](image)

Again, the low brass are used in a ff dynamic in an extremely powerful register for each respective instrument. This is repeated in measures 15-19, 137-139,141-145. The only time the tuba has a lyrical solo in Movement I is in measures 183-187.
The tuba and trombones serve the function more often of offering violent punctuations.

There is a continuously recurring two-note figure that is seen clearly in measure 20 of Movement I as seen in Example 5.8:

Example 5.8 Symphony No. 6, mvt I, mm 20-22.

These jabbing brass notes continue from measures 20-34 in direct contrast to the melodic line marked *cantabile*.

The low brass never have *cantabile* marked in their parts in the Symphony No.6. Instead, as in the Symphony no.4, they play a part in establishing the character of a satirical march. This bawdy March in 12/8 takes up much of Movement I from measures 43-129. The tuba and trombones take on the comic role of the “oom-pahs” as seen in Example 5.9 below:
Example 5.9 Symphony No. 6, mvt I, mm 72-78.

In Movement I in measures 116-129, the trombones join the trumpets in octaves with the melody, while the tuba keeps up the comic role. The woodwind and violin grace notes add to the bizarre comic flare of this section as seen in Example 5.10 below:

Example 5.10 Symphony No. 6, mvt I, mm 116-120.
This jovial character becomes a little less so for the tubist in measure 124-125. The triplet pattern is suddenly put into the upper register reaching up to a high d before returning to the low register and therefore covering more than a two octave range in one bar. There is last echo of this march in measures 156-158, which then leads into the one of the more beautiful orchestrational sections of the symphony. Vaughan Williams is at his best here, with the warmth of the string sound presenting a stirring tonal melody, supported by various instrumental groupings. The overt major sounding tonality, in midst of all of this conflict, makes it that much more effective.

In Movement I from measures 159-171 the string section turns the melody from the March into a beautiful floating melody that is accompanied by the unlikely pairing of harp and trombones. In a rare instance in this symphony, Vaughan Williams is uses the warmth of the trombone sound to support the strings, adding a rich, but soft depth to the sound as seen in Example 5.11:

![Example 5.11 Symphony No. 6, mvt I, mm 160-166.](image)

The tuba joins this texture from measures 172-187. Throughout this section the parts are marked *dolce* and the brass trade off chorale-like statements in one of the most uplifting moments of the Symphony. In measures 183 the tuba presents a fragment of the theme that was first stated by the
violins in measure 159, as can be seen in Example 5.11. As the brass crescendo in measure 156, it seems as if the symphony will turn to triumph and rise to a glorious summit, but instead, dissonance returns with a g in the melody against and f minor chord. The low brass fulfill a harmonic function in outlining this chord in measure 187 as well as the blast of an e minor chord in measure 188. The tuba and timpani are left out of the e minor blast in measure 189 to great effect. With only bassoons, trumpet 2 and 3, trombones and double bass, it has tremendous harshness, but a hollow sound, the soul has been taken away from the chord. Vaughan Williams eliminates all notes except for E in the final orchestral tutti blast. Who knew a single note could sound so ominous.

The interchangeability of octaves, unison, and harmonic function in the low brass is a common feature throughout the symphony. Each individual trombone part and the tuba can be paired in almost any manner. In general, the low brass tend to function more as a section in this symphony, but there is plenty of variety. At many points the tuba and bass trombone are independent from the tenor trombones such as Movement I in measures 18-20, Movement II in 106-109, Movement III in 1-7, 20-24, and 224-233.

The trade-off between low brass parts continues in this symphony as well as is seen in Movement III in measures 42-45 in Example 5.12 below:
Example 5.12 Symphony No. 6, mvt III, mm 42-45.

These trade-offs happen in Movement III many times, the most prominent taking place in measures 185-186, 277-283, 331-348. A kind of trade-off happens in measure 31-33 in which the tuba has a part that is not shared with anyone in the orchestra as seen in Example 5.13 below:

Example 5.13 Symphony No. 6, mvt III, mm 31-33.
This is one of the only times that the tuba is not paired with another instrument. One of the more unusual pairings with tuba occurs in Movement III in measures 246-248. Here the tuba is coupled with the tenor sax, and 4th horn as seen in Example 5.14 below:

Example 5.14  Symphony No. 6, mvt III, mm 246-248.

One prominent feature of all the previous symphonies is the singling out of the wind band and brass sections. This technique is rarely used in the Symphony No.6. The dominant idea in this symphony is more about the interaction of high and low instrument groups, than the separation of winds and brass sonority. When separation of colors does occur it does not happen as in previous symphonies with the color of the traditional wind band. In Movement I in measures 130-136 there is an alternation, but it is only between strings and woodwinds. In Movement II in measures 28-30 the brass section, minus the tuba, is featured in a fanfare, which is contrasted with string sonority in measures 31-36.

Vaughan Williams does not use the tuba in Movement IV, although he does employ muted trombones. I believe this is because of the very nature of Movement IV. This movement represents utter desolation and hopelessness. The strings are muted with the indication senza crescendo constantly noted. There are slight hints of emotion, but mostly just hollowness. Vaughan Williams has made it clear that he does not fear using the tuba in extremely soft and
exposed textures, but it always adds warmth. Warmth is exactly what this movement is devoid of. Some have likened this movement to the aftermath of a cataclysmic confrontation. This movement represents what is left of a once-glorious world. It is one of most haunting moments in all of Vaughan Williams symphonic output.

Vaughan Williams continues to use the low brass in diverse ways in Symphony No. 6, but it is apparent that the trombones and tuba are his favored instruments for the representation of violence and domination. The tuba might have a bit less to do in this symphony, but the quality and interaction of the part in the orchestra shows Vaughan Williams is always experimenting and learning, which in turn continually stretches the limits of the orchestral instrumentalist.
Chapter 6: Symphony No. 7

The Symphony No. 7 carries the title “Sinfonia Antartica,” and is made up of material composed for the film _Scott of Antarctica_ (1947). The orchestra is once again quite large; strings, full brass section, triple woodwinds, expanded percussion section, organ, piano, harp, women’s chorus, soprano solo. It is in five contrasting movements with each movement carrying a literary quotation which is listed in the preface to the full score and can be referenced in this document in Appendix B on page 114.

Symphony No. 7, _Sinfonia Antartica_, is in many ways a return to the programmatic style of the Symphony No. 1 and the low brass parts reflect this. Vaughan Williams uses extensive doubling throughout the entire range of the orchestra to create large expansive soundscapes. The doubling of low instruments, especially, impart a sensation of menace and uneasiness, often in direct contrast to the shimmering textures created by the high woodwinds or percussion. Additionally, Vaughan Williams creates a sensation of the bitter coldness of the Antarctic through his use of a wind machine, and in contrast, the vast majesty of its landscape with the use of the gong and pipe organ. Eerie colors are added through the use of solo voice, women’s chorus, and various percussion techniques. Unfortunately, the technical challenges for the tubist and complexity of the tuba part, as seen in the previous two symphonies are not present in the Symphony No.7. The tuba is mostly used to present a single color in this symphony, that of a grouping of low instruments in heavy doubling. As in all Vaughan Williams symphonies, there are exceptions. The tuba is used in a few subtle ways, but again mostly in the traditional manner.
to bolster the bass line. This is not to downplay the importance of the role of the tuba; the tuba is
a vital part of the character of this symphony and is given a rather large part.

The tuba shares in the thematic materials of the Symphony No. 7 quite often. In
Movement I, the theme is introduced in the bass trombone and oboe parts. This theme moves
around the orchestra and is stated in the tuba in measure 21 as seen in Example 6.1 below:

Example 6.1 Symphony No. 7, mvt I, mm 21-24.

This theme also returns in Movement V in measures 143-148 and 168-170. Vaughan Williams
shows his orchestrational intentions with the very first statement of the theme. Here the tuba is
the dominant sound, doubled by English horn, clarinets, bassoons, violas, cellos, and basses. The
theme’s counter melody is also doubled heavily, therefore creating a very open orchestral
sonority. This can be seen in the statement of the first theme in Movement I in measures 52-53
with the addition of bass trombone doubling the tuba in Example 6.2 below.

Example 6.2 Symphony No. 7, mvt I, mm 52-53.

When the tuba has thematic material in this symphony, however, it is usually not doubled by
bass trombone at the octave in this symphony.

Another theme, as seen below in Example 6.3, in Movement I is presented in measures 59-68 in
which the muted tuba is extensively doubled, not by the trombones, but instead by the unlikely
combination of violin, viola, cello, bass, oboe, clarinet 2, and bassoons.
Example 6.3 Symphony No. 7, mvt I, mm 59-68.
Example 6.3 Continued.
In Movement II Vaughan Williams contrasts dense parallel chords with the sparse, but heavily double texture in measures 44-59. In measures 44-47 the horns, trombones, and tuba are voiced close together with parallel motion at the $pp$ dynamic. In contrast, in measures 48-52, there is extensive doubling with the English horn, clarinets, bassoons, cello and tuba having the theme. Note that the tuba drops out in measure 51-52 as seen in Example 6.4 below.
Example 6.4 Symphony No. 7, mvt II, mm 48-52.

It is curious why Vaughan Williams chooses not to have the tuba continue the same line with all the other instruments. By this point in his career, Vaughan Williams was certainly aware that the tuba could meet the technical demands presented in measures 50-52. In this symphony the tuba seems to be assigned less busy melodies in contrast to the fast moving lines, like in Movement II, measures 68-73 as seen in Example 6.5 below:
Example 6.5 Symphony No. 7, mvt II, mm 68-73.

This particular use of the tuba can also be seen in measures 104-107 of Movement II with the tuba on moving quarter notes, doubled by only contra bassoon, bass, and harp, against the rest of the orchestra playing faster triplet eighth notes.

Movement III presents a theme of long note values marked *pesante* against the flowing eighth note pattern of the woodwinds and harp from measures 24-49. The low instrument grouping of bassoons, trombones, tuba, and basses stays constant while the high grouping alternates between woodwinds and strings. This timbre and motion contrast is also seen in Movement I in measures 59-67 in which the orchestra is in octaves with a slow moving theme, while the xylophone and piano are providing a fast ostinato figure. These strange and ever-
shifting combinations and voicings of instruments seem intended to keep the listener off balance by creating a foreign and unfamiliar landscape. Nowhere is this more obvious than in Movement III, titled “Landscape.”

One of the most effective textures that Vaughan Williams creates can be seen in Movement III in measures 44-49. Example 6.6 below shows measures 44 to 45 of that passage.
Example 6.6 Symphony No. 7, mvt III, mm 44-45.
Here he creates an ethereal, almost other-worldly sound by juxtaposing three separate sonorities; first, the harp and percussion effects, second, the woodwind and high string ostinato, and third, the sustained melody sounded by low instruments. This texture is violently disrupted in measure 50 by the entry of the gong at fff dynamic which is answered by the brass, moving from high sonorities to low until the there is nothing left but the a unison A-flat that fades to nothing. The dramatic interruption by the gong is used to keep the listener off-balance, and serves the programmatic idea of unpredictability in a foreign and inhospitable environment. The low instruments in this passage, once again, represent a gloomy sense of finality.

Nowhere in the symphony is there more a sense of something (the icy abyss, or death itself) absolutely massive and immovable than in measures 56-64, 76-82, and 118-126. At these points the huge orchestra is split up into only two groups starting at different points, but with the same melodic line, which is absent of any kind of rhythmic activity. This haunting effect is further enhanced by muted trumpets and trombones all at a dynamic of pp. In general the tuba is part of an open sound in the bass line, with only the high instruments adding the muted color. The tuba perfectly fits into the organ part, which is marked “16 and 32” in the pedals. At the ff statement of this theme in measures 118-126 the organ is registration is marked “8, 16, 32 (no reeds),” which further proves through the absence of higher registers and upper work that Vaughan Williams wanted the bass to be as open and resonant sound as possible. With the entire symphony orchestra playing at a ff dynamic in unison rhythm, this passage creates one of the most ominous sounds in symphonic literature. The image that is created is twofold, that of a huge vista, and that of the unstoppable force of nature. This is broken by the strike of the gong at measure 122, followed by an organ solo filled with rich major chords. Not only is there contrast of color from orchestra to organ, but also polyphonic texture to homophonic texture. The effect
is one of awe. It is as if the listener forgets about the danger of Antarctica for a moment, but the high instruments of the orchestra incessantly remind us of the inevitable by blasting a minimalistic syncopated rhythm continuously from measure 136-141 until the bulk of the orchestra fades away.

In measures 143-146 the tuba is grouped with the trombones and horns in a chorale type statement which is then echoed only in the low brass and basses in measures 146-147 as seen in Example 6.7 below:

**Example 6.7** Symphony No. 7, mvt III, mm 143-148.
This is one of the few times the low brass sonority is separated from the orchestra. It is significant in this example, because it is the end of the hopeful motive which is soured by the dissonance in the flute and clarinet parts and the chill of the cymbal marked “with a soft stick.” Movement III ends with no bass instruments with which to add warmth to the sound of the solo muted trumpet and icy cold cymbal.

In rare instances in Movement II in measures 12-13, 15, and 53-56, the tuba takes on an entirely different character, that of happiness and lightness. To achieve this character, Vaughan Williams places the tuba in the high range grouped with other instruments in their high ranges. It is interesting that the trombones are part of this bright-sounding group. The example at measure 53-56 is marked solo, while the trombone section doubles the basses. The tuba quickly switches character, but maintains its solo stature in measure 57 while joining the trombones and contrabassoon as seen in Example 6.8 below:

Example 6.8 Symphony No. 7, mvt II, mm 53-58.

The tuba part shifts rapidly in character through the use of range again in Movement V in measures 156-170. The tuba starts in the low register in measure 157 and crescendos from
measure 160 to the climax at measure 162. At this climax, the tuba, along with the bass trombone and basses, leaps to over an octave higher. (This gives a slightly different quality to the orchestra than when it happens for the first time, in Movement I in measures 48 and 54. In this particular instance, Vaughan Williams is using the tuba to accentuate the fall from high to low.) This idea continues even further, when at measure 172 there is no longer G Major chord as in previous statements, and no longer a tuba either as the orchestra transitions into the lonely sounds of the solo voice and chorus.

Perhaps what is most curious about the orchestration of Symphony No. 7 is the absence of the wind band color that has been so prevalent in all of Vaughan Williams’ previous symphonies. The wind and brass writing is consistently more integrated and not isolated in distinct contrasting forces. Vaughan Williams still retains his penchant for color change; but chooses to mix the woodwind and brass into different groupings. One clear example is in Movement V in measures 89-99 where there is an alternation between string and wind sonorities, but it is not as sharp a contrast because horns and clarinets join the string texture in measures 90-91 and trumpets join the woodwind texture in measures 94-97.

Even the familiar technique of trading off thematic material within the low brass section is slightly modified from that of previous symphonies. In Movement II in measures 75-84, the principal trumpet and principal trombone trade off melodic material, instead of keeping the trade-off within the section. There is one statement that follows the old pattern of trade off in Movement II, measures 95-100. This also offers a glimpse of the cross rhythms that were so prevalent in Symphony No. 4 and No. 6. See Example 6.9 below:
Example 6.9 Symphony No. 7, mvt II, mm 95-100.

In the Symphony No. 7 Vaughan Williams seems to prefer other groupings of instruments for stark contrast. One such place is the solo organ, which could be seen as a substitute for the wind band, in Movement III beginning in measure 127. Here the *tutti* orchestra drops out, leaving only the organ, which can easily balance the full orchestra in volume. The contrast of sound is heightened by the motion from a polyphonic texture in the orchestra to a homophonic texture in the organ part. Another new effect that he creates is found in Movement I at measure 184. There is an intense build up preceding measure 184 and then suddenly the majority of the orchestra drops out and only bass clarinet, bassoons, bass trombone, tuba, cello and basses are left on the downbeat with a *ff* marking, then the entire orchestra enters on the next beat, in effect, making it a bass trombone and tuba soli. This type of writing can be found in many blockbuster movies scores. In film moments like this happen at significant points in the plot development, usually the death of a character. This is particularly of interest for Symphony No. 7 since the low brass seem to represent the more ominous and dark nature of the Antarctic journey.

The tuba has a couple of small chromatic interjections in Movement I, measures 104-106 and 108-109, which brings out the sinister sound of the bass line. More often it is the absence of tuba that is interesting. One explanation for lack of varied use of the tuba is that the conical
sound of the tuba simply does not lend itself to the representation of the cold and austere aspects of an icy expanse. For example, the recurring section that first presents itself in Movement I in measure 68 could easily have tuba doubling the basses and timpani. Especially at measures 134-140 where the bass clarinet, bassoons, and strings have chords. The addition of a bell in the percussion section makes this section sound even more funereal, but it is the similarity to the movement *Saturn* in Gustav Holst’s *Planets* that makes tuba seem like an appropriate orchestration choice.

It is clear that Vaughan Williams uses orchestral techniques he has established in previous symphonies, but only the ones that serve to enhance the descriptive or programmatic aspects of the work. The tuba is given a crucial role in expressing the massive and expansive character of this symphony; it is just that most of that character is stereotypically heavy and rhythmically simple.
Chapter 7: Symphony No. 9

The last symphony of Vaughan Williams, composed in 1956-57, when he was 86 years old, continues his tradition of exploration and creativity. The large orchestra calls for the unusual addition of a saxophone section (three individual parts), flugelhorn, and an expanded percussion section. Its four movements are in the following forms: Movement I, Sonata form, II- Scherzo and trio, III- sectional, IV- sectional, V- in two sections: I- Binary form, II, Sonata from and coda.

The Symphony No. 9 has a prominent and varied tuba part which incorporates orchestration techniques that Vaughan Williams used in his previous symphonies. Vaughan Williams continues the use of a large and colorful orchestra with the addition of an entire saxophone section and a flugel horn. Vaughan Williams also continues to contrast sonorities and textures within the orchestra, although, as seen in the last two symphonies, the contrasting sonorities are not as sharply divided between winds, brass, and strings, but instead tend to fall into groupings of high instruments and low instruments. These contrasting elements, in turn, serve to emphasize the difference between thin and thick textures. The role of the tuba is almost exclusively relegated to thick, heavy textures in this symphony. This is particularly evident by the almost constant pairing of bass trombone and tuba throughout the Symphony No. 9.

This pairing begins immediately at the start of Movement I. In measure 2-10 the tuba and trombones are given the first theme in octaves with the marking “prominent,” even though the dynamic is $p$. The low brass along with the English horn, bassoons, and bass clarinet are the only
instruments in the orchestra with the theme in the opening. The only other time the low brass have this theme at the $p$ dynamic is in measures 108-111. This time it is in the more common form of bass trombone and tuba, followed by the tenor trombones in imitation as seen in Example 7.1 below:

Example 7.1 Symphony No. 9, mvt I, mm 108-110.

In Movement I this theme is presented numerous times with slight variations. In measure 17 the tuba and bass trombone state the theme at a $f$ dynamic in the low register in octaves and are joined by the unison tenor trombones measure 22 in imitation. In measure 52 the trombones and tuba have this theme in octaves together at a $f$ dynamic. The second theme is presented in the measure 82 with the bass trombone and tuba in octaves at a $ff$ dynamic and tenor trombones in unison with a counter melody as seen in Example 7.2 below:

Example 7.2 Symphony No. 9, mvt I, mm 82-88.
This theme is presented in its most dramatic form beginning at measure 124. Once again the bass trombone and tuba are in octaves for this entire statement with dynamics starting at $ff$ diminishing to $p$.

In Movement II in measures 118-130 the bass trombone and tuba provide a sustained plodding bass line in at a $ff$ dynamic, while the tenor trombones have the theme first presented in measure 8. This theme in measure 8 illustrates the extreme contrast of orchestral color that Vaughan Williams achieves so well. The opening of Movement II has a single flugelhorn playing the melody, which is then rudely interrupted by a group of instruments with muted trombones and tuba “sneering” at a $f$ dynamic. The low brass provide the harmonic dissonance, sound color, and rhythmic impetus to this theme. The low brass are always included in this bizarre, march-like interjection. This is best seen in measures 17-22 in which the low brass have parallel motion which sounds vaguely reminiscent of ninth century organum because of the bass trombone and tuba in parallel fourths. Once again the tuba is marked at a $ff$ dynamic and is a contributor to this heavy sound as can be seen in Example 7.3 below:

Example 7.3 Symphony No. 9, mvt II, mm17-22.

In Movement III the bass trombone and tuba continue to fulfill their foundational “heavy” role by sounding in octaves or parallel in fourths or fifths. The traditional octave doubling can be seen most clearly in measures 127-194, while in measures 268-277, the tuba and
bass trombone are placed in parallel motion in unison orchestral rhythm at the ff dynamic. Note that Vaughan Williams does not divide the double basses. The basses and tuba can provide a strong enough bass sound at this moment without doubling with the bass trombone.

In Movement IV the tuba and bass trombone return to doubling at key thematic points such as measures 97-104. Here the bass trombone and tuba are the dominant voice of the low group of instruments marked at f dynamic and marcato as can be seen in Example 7.4 below:

Example 7.4 Symphony No. 9, mvt IV, mm 97-104.

This theme returns again in octaves in the bass trombone and tuba with slight variances in measures 173-175 and 191-212. These passages highlight the fact that the bass trombone and tuba are treated as if they were one combined instrument throughout this symphony. It is critical for the bass trombonist and tubist to balance and blend their sounds together.

One exception to this can be found in opening of Movement III. The snare drum passage in measures 2-8 alerts the listener to the 6/8 march tempo, but the tuba and trombones do not function as the bass line here. Instead they sound a ff dissonant muted blast. The bass trombone and tuba are put at an interval of a minor second apart, as seen below in Example 7.5:
Example 7.5 Symphony No. 9, mvt III, mm 2-6.

This dissonance occurs at measures 123 with just trombones and 195 with tuba and trombones, and is extremely unusual in Vaughan Williams’ writing for the tuba and trombone.

In other segments, the tuba returns to its traditional role in the march-like quality of Movement III, as can be seen in measures 42-48, 72-75, 150-154, and 157-158. In these instances, Vaughan Williams choose to add little flourishes to the tuba part that are common in the woodwind and string parts as seen in Example 7.6 below:

Example 7.6 Symphony No. 9, mvt III, mm 2-6.

These brief triplet flourishes can be seen in measures 143,150,151,157,158,176, and 276. Although these seem trivial, it does show that Vaughan Williams is keenly aware of the technical capabilities of the tuba, a knowledge that is further demonstrated by his inclusion of brief, but challenging solos in the march-like Movement III.

When the tuba does have a solo in the Symphony No. 9, it is almost always in the upper range of the instrument, for projection. The two main examples of this are in measures 52-56 and
143-147. In both instances the tuba is not heavily doubled and stands out above the other instruments. The solo in measures 52-56, as seen in Example 7.7 below, covers a wide range and is very reminiscent of the first movement of the tuba concerto.

Example 7.7 Symphony No. 9, mvt III, mm 52-56.

Another characteristic which was seen beginning in Symphony No.4 is Vaughan Williams’ use of the trading off of thematic material within the low brass section. In Movement II in measures 107-116, the trombones start the theme and then pass it off to the tuba as seen in Example 7.8 below:

Example 7.8 Symphony No. 9, mvt II, mm 107-116.

A alternating pattern of trade offs between the bass trombone and tuba parts occurs in Movement II in measures 40-45 with the double basses remaining constant as seen in Example 7.9 below:
Example 7.9 Symphony No. 9, mvt II, mm 40-45.

This same pattern of alternation happens briefly in Movement IV in measures 176-179 and 197-201. Vaughan Williams expands this idea of alternation slightly in Movement I, where he has the tuba alternate with the horns, while the trombones are *tacet*. Each horn part and the tuba part is doubled with a saxophone part for added color. Vaughan Williams has grouped the horns with the tuba before, but never with this pattern of alternation as seen in measures 102-107 in Example 7.10 below:
Example 7.10 Symphony No. 9, mvt I, mm 102-107.

Whether writing a solo part, or a supportive part, Vaughan Williams seems to be using the tuba for primarily for purposes of color and for the character of its sonority in the Symphony No. 9. Sometimes the tuba jumps out of the texture briefly in a solo role, while at other times it sounds an ugly muted blast. The tuba is able to represent many different characteristics, from stately to violent, to goofy. These many characteristics manifest themselves, no matter how briefly, in this symphony. The tuba is used as a prominent voice in stating thematic material, but again, its use is primarily a function of character. This character can be subtly manipulated.
through register placement, muting, or orchestral doubling. On the surface it seems that Vaughan Williams has returned to the basic use of bass trombone and tuba as a function of doubling the bass line, but despite the prominence of this feature, there are varied uses of the tuba throughout the entire symphony that display Vaughan Williams’ creativity in orchestration.
Conclusion

Ralph Vaughan Williams' Symphonies can be counted among the greatest in the twentieth century. The only other twentieth century composers that can compare in scope and productivity of symphonic composition are Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitri Shostakovich, and Jean Sibelius. One of Vaughan Williams' major achievements was to “bring England back into the mainstream of musical composition.”

It is fascinating that he did so without a radical departure from standard form and orchestration. In fact, he looked backward in history to revive the English folksong and incorporated those ideas into a thoroughly modern symphonic expression. Pike acknowledges that “for Vaughan Williams the symphony— that most highly intellectual of forms— was the form into which he poured his deepest utterances, his innermost thoughts, his most personal outpourings.”

Vaughan Williams seeks inspiration from many different sources that influence his symphonic writing. Clues to these extra musical aspects of his music are stated in the preface of the score, or reflected in the text, or simply inferred by the listener. However one chooses to view the issue of program and narrative in the nine symphonies, the ability of Vaughan Williams to communicate the human condition through the medium of the symphony orchestra is undeniable. A central element of the human condition is

1 Schwartz, *The Symphonies of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 199.
conflict. Vaughan Williams expressed conflict in his symphonies by means of a traditional late-romantic symphony orchestra, but with expanded colors which include, at times, the use of organ, piano, saxophone, expanded percussion instruments, women’s chorus, full chorus, and vocal soloists.

To understand Vaughan Williams concept of orchestration, it is critical to deal with his concept of “color.” Vaughan Williams has been criticized, in part, for being too traditional because of a lack of avant-garde techniques. He chose instead to capture the essence of each orchestral instrument by scoring it in its most effective range and technical capabilities. Because of his innate ability to score, the music is allowed to speak freely and directly, which is what I believe he meant when he said he was, “suspicious of brilliantly scored music.” He believed that flashy use of instrumental color represented a lack of real ideas. Although he studied with Maurice Ravel, considered one greatest composers of orchestral color of the twentieth century, Ravel himself is quoted as saying Vaughan Williams was his only student not to compose like he did. ³ To Vaughan Williams, color is a function of storytelling. It can be harnessed to increase the power of the narrative and/or the pictoral elements of the composition.

This is most obvious with his use of isolated solos throughout the symphonies. Each instrument represents a different character and elicits different emotional responses, whether it is the solo Flügelhorn in Symphony No. 9 or the solo soprano voice in Symphony No. 3. The medium of orchestral expression is an essential component of the drama itself. These intense emotional moments of genius in Vaughan Williams symphonies are what put him in the pantheon of great composers. His music asks big

³Pike, Vaughan Williams and the Symphony, 35.
questions; How do we deal with conflict? Is our lone voice important? Can mankind conquer nature? Can mankind survive the ravages of war? Can we find peace?

These big questions are painted on a large orchestral canvass. The large forces engaged in a monumental struggle in the Symphony No. 4 and Symphony No. 6 are divided mostly between high and low instruments. These groups of instruments are heavily doubled, making the conflict even more powerful. The thematic material of the low group is dominated by the sound of the trombones and tuba. They are the primary voice of Vaughan Williams “low” army. Both the Symphony No.4 and No. 6 begin with the low brass, but there is no victor in the case of the Symphony No. 6.

Large groupings of instruments frequently present themes, or represent new musical ideas. The wind band grouping is common in the first two symphonies and provides a striking contrast to the string sonority. In this setting the tuba stands out even more, because it is the largest bass wind instrument. The woodwinds serve to color the tuba’s sound. This technique evolves throughout his symphonies. Gradually, instrument families begin to break apart into high versus low combinations. As this happens the tuba takes on more importance in thematic material, reaching its peak in Symphony No. 4 and No.6.

The low instrument group is not used exclusively for loud passages; often they provide a soft warm color to the orchestra. Subtle variation of color within this grouping is another orchestrational technique that Vaughan Williams uses frequently in order to draw attention to, or keep the interest in repeated rhythmic segments. This manifests itself as trade-off between trombone and tuba parts while string parts remain constant.
This technique is increasingly used throughout the symphonies and expands to trade-offs within the same family of instruments.

There is a sudden leap in the technical difficulty and importance of the tuba in Symphony No. 4. For reasons stated earlier, the tuba becomes a vital descriptive element in the narrative, but that alone does not explain the sudden jump. One cannot help but speculate that the composition of three major works for wind band\(^4\) influenced his familiarity with the tuba. It is, however, interesting to note that after he composed these wind band works, the isolation of the wind band as an orchestrational technique diminished in his symphonies. The combination of the wind band compositions and the impressive technical demands placed on the tubist in Symphony No. 4 and Symphony No. 6 lays the ground work for the Tuba Concerto to be written almost seven years later. The skill with which Vaughan Williams crafts the tuba concerto would not have been possible without the diligent and passionate exploration of the tuba in his symphonies.

\(^4\)English Folk Songs for Military Band (1923), Sea Songs for Military Band (1924), Toccata Marziale for Military Band (1924).


__________. A Sea Symphony for Soprano and Baritone Soli, Chorus and Orchestra in Four Movements [Symphony No. 1]. London: Stainer & Bell, 1926.


__________. Pastoral Symphony [Symphony No. 3]. London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1924.
Sinfonia Antartica [sic] [Symphony No. 7]. London: Oxford University Press, 1953.


Appendix A: Relevant Compositions and Dates


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<td>Symphony No. 9</td>
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Appendix B: Movement titles and Preface to Symphony No. 7.

**Movement I**- Prelude: Andante Maestoso

(from Percy Shelly’s *Prometheus Unbound*):

To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite,
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night,
To defy power which seems omnipotent,
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent:
This . . . is to be

Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free,
This is alone life, joy, empire and victory.

**Movement II**- Scherzo: Moderato

(Psalm 104):

There go the ships
And there is that Leviathan
Whom thou hast made to take his pastime therein.
Movement III- Landscape: Lento
(from Coleridge’s *Hymn before Sunrise, in the Vale of Chamouni*):
Ye ice falls! Ye that from the mountain’s brow
Adown enormous ravines slope amain –
Torrents, methinks, that heard a mighty voice.
And stopped at once amid their maddest plunge!
Motionless torrents! Silent cataracts

Movement IV- Intermezzo: Andante sostenuto
(from Donne’s *The Sun Rising*):
Love, all alike, no seasons knows, nor clime
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

Movement V- Epilogue: Alla Marcia, moderato (non troppo allegro)
(from Captain Scott’s last Journal)
I do not regret this journey; we took risks, we knew we took
Them, things have come our against us, therefore we have
No cause for complaint.
Appendix C: Text to Symphony No. 1 (Sea Symphony)

(From liner notes to Compact Disc recording, *A Sea Symphony*, EMI 49911)

**Movement I**- A song for all seas, all ships

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

Today a rude brief recitative,
Of ships sailing the seas, each with its special flag or ship-signal,
Of unnamed heroes in the ships- of waves spreading and spreading far as the eye can reach,
Of dashing spray, and the winds piping and blowing,
And out of these a chant for the sailors of all nations,
Fitful, like a surge.
Of sea-captains young or old, and the mates, and of all intrepid sailors,
Of the few, very choice, taciturn, whom fate can never surprise nor death dismay,
Picked sparingly without noise by thee old ocean, chosen by thee,
Thou sea that pickest and cullest the race in time, and unitest the nations,
Suckled by thee, old husky nurse, embodying thee,
Indomitable, untamed as thee.

Flaunt out, O sea, your separate flags of nations!
Flaunt out visible as ever the various flags and ship-signals!
But do you reserve especially for yourself and for the soul of man one flag above all the rest,
A spiritual woven signal for all nations, emblem of man elate above death,
Token of all brave captains and of all intrepid sailors and mates,
And all that went down doing their duty,
Reminiscent of them, twined from all intrepid captains young or old,
A pennant universal, subtly waving all time, o’er all brave sailors,
All seas, all ships.

Movement II- On the beach at night, alone.

On the beach at night, alone,
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky song,
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of the clef of the universes and of the future.
A vast similitude interlocks all,
All distances of space however wide,
All distances of time,
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different,
All nations, all identities that have existed or may exist,
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spanned,
And shall forever span them and shall compactly hold and enclose them.

Movement III- Scherzo: Waves

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

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

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

O we can wait no longer,
We too take ship O soul,
Joyous we too launch out on trackless seas,
Fearless for unknown shores on waves of ecstasy to sail,
Amid the wafting winds (thou pressing me to thee, I thee to me, O Soul),
Caroling free, singing our song of God,
Chanting our chant of pleasant exploration.

O Soul thou pleasest me, I thee,
Sailing these seas or on the hills, or walking in the night,
Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time and Space and Death, like water flowing,
Bear me indeed as through regions infinite,
Whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear, lave me all over,
Bathe me, O God, in thee, mounting to thee,
I and my soul to range in range of thee.

O thou transcendent,
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
Light of the light, shedding forth universes, thou centre of them.
Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space and Death,
But that I, turning, call to thee O Soul, thou actual me,
And lo, thou gently masterest the orbs,
Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death,
And fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of Space.
Greater than stars or suns,
Bounding O Soul thou journeyest forth;
Away O Soul! Hoist instantly the anchor!
Cut the hawsers- haul out –shake out every sail!
Sail forth, steer for the deep waters only,
Reckless O Soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,
For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.
O my brave Soul!
O farther, farther sail!
O darling joy, but safe! Are they not all the seas of God?
O farther, farther, farther sail!