

# British Isles

Saturday, November 12, 2016 • 7:30 p.m.

First Free Methodist Church

**Orchestra Seattle**  
**Seattle Chamber Singers**  
**Alastair Willis**, conductor



MALCOLM ARNOLD (1921–2006)  
Four Scottish Dances, Op. 59

*Pesante*  
*Vivace*  
*Allegretto*  
*Con brio*

PETE SEEGER (1919–2014) / arr. Jimmy Joyce  
“The Bells of Rhymney”

TRADITIONAL / arr. K. Lee Scott  
“All Through the Night”

CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD (1852–1924)  
Irish Rhapsody No. 1, Op. 78

*Allegro molto* — *Adagio non troppo* — Tempo I — *Allegro*

— **intermission** —

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)  
*A Sea Symphony*

A Song for All Seas, All Ships (*Moderato maestoso*)  
On the Beach at Night, Alone (*Largo sostenuto*)  
Scherzo: The Waves (*Allegro brillante*)  
The Explorers (*Grave e molto adagio* — *Andante con moto*)

**Amanda Opuszynski**, soprano  
**José Rubio**, baritone

*Please silence cell phones and other electronics, and refrain from the use of cameras and recording devices during the performance.*

*Special thanks to First Free Methodist Church for all of their assistance in making OSSCS's 47th season possible, and for providing refreshments during intermission. Donations left at the refreshments tables help support FFMC and its programs.*

## Program Notes

### Malcolm Arnold

#### Four Scottish Dances, Op. 59

*Sir Malcolm Arnold was born in Northampton, England, October 21, 1921, and died in Norwich on September 23, 2006. He composed this set of orchestral dances in 1957 for the BBC Light Music Festival, conducting the BBC Concert Orchestra in the first performance at the Royal Festival Hall on June 8, 1957.*

While still a teenager, Malcolm Arnold joined the trumpet section of the London Philharmonic, subsequently moving to the BBC Symphony Orchestra before returning to the Philharmonic as principal. In 1948 he gave up life as an orchestral musician to become a full-time composer. Best known for his lighter music (including *A Grand, Grand Overture* for three vacuum cleaners, one floor polisher, four rifles and orchestra), Arnold composed nine remarkable symphonies, 20 concertos, a great deal of chamber music and more than 60 film scores.

In 1950 the publishing firm Alfred Lengnick & Co. requested from Malcolm Arnold and other British composers sets of orchestral dances modeled after Antonín Dvořák's Slavonic Dances (from which they had earned a significant income as sole British distributor). Arnold responded with Four English Dances, followed by a second set in 1951. Four Scottish Dances arrived in 1957, with later sets of Cornish Dances (1966), Irish Dances (1986) and Welsh Dances (1989).

A publisher's note identifies the first of the Scottish Dances as being "in the style of a slow strathspey," a dance in  $\frac{4}{4}$  time that resembles a hornpipe, but in a slower tempo and marked by the familiar "Scotch snap" sixteenth-dotted-eighth rhythm. Trombones evoke the drone of bagpipes while horns unleash wild two-octave glissandos.

"The second, a lively reel," the note continues, "begins in the key of Eb and rises a semitone each time it is played until the bassoon plays it, at a greatly reduced speed, in the key of G. The final statement of the dance is at the original speed in the home key of Eb." Arnold reportedly based this movement (recycled from a cue he had composed for the 1949 documentary *The Beautiful County of Ayr*) on a tune by Robert Burns.

"The third dance is in the style of a Hebridean song and attempts to give an impression of the sea and mountain scenery on a calm summer's day in the Hebrides." In this beautifully orchestrated movement, with the tune introduced by solo flute over arpeggiated harp chords, Arnold (according to John France) "has succeeded in producing music that is more 'Scottish' than the Scots would write."

The breathless finale, in  $\frac{2}{4}$  time, "is a lively fling which makes a great deal of use of the open strings of the violins."

### Pete Seeger

#### "The Bells of Rhymney"

The son of a musicologist and a concert violinist—and the stepson of noted composer Ruth Crawford Seeger—Pete Seeger enjoyed a magnificent career as an American folk singer, songwriter and activist that spanned more than

70 years. In 1957 he set to music "The Bells of Rhymney," a brief poem from Welshman Idris Davies' *Gwalia Deserta*.

"Davies, a coal miner in south Wales was a friend of Dylan Thomas," recounted Seeger. "I came across this poem reprinted in one of Thomas' essays. After the failure of the general strike of 1926, Idris Davies—determined to leave coal mining—became a school teacher in London, and published three slim volumes of poetry. Rhymney is a typical mining town: one hundred yards wide and two miles long." Following Seeger's initial recording, on the 1958 live LP *Pete Seeger and Sonny Terry*, a number of other artists covered the song, from The Byrds to Cher to Bob Dylan to John Denver.

### Traditional

#### "All Through the Night"

The song "Ar Hyd y Nos" first appeared in Edward Jones' 1784 tome *Musical and Poetical Relics of the Welsh Bards*. In 1886 Harold Boulton wrote English lyrics (heard this evening) recorded by a number of popular singers, often on Christmas albums.

### Charles Villiers Stanford

#### Irish Rhapsody No. 1, Op. 78

*Stanford was born in Dublin on September 30, 1852, and died in London on March 29, 1924. He completed the first of his Irish Rhapsodies in March 1902, conducting the premiere on October 23 of that year at the triennial Norwich Festival.*

Charles Villiers Stanford studied music at Cambridge University, where he became a professor in 1887 while retaining a post teaching composition at the Royal College of Music. A respected choral and orchestral conductor, his compositions include seven symphonies, 10 operas, numerous choral, chamber and keyboard works, and greatly admired music for Anglican church services.

Between 1901 and 1922, Stanford composed six Irish Rhapsodies, two of them miniature concertos (for violin and cello) but the others crafted as standalone symphonic works. "They are skillfully developed movements, perfectly proportioned and balanced with the greatest regard for thematic cohesion," wrote one of Stanford's students, Thomas Dunhill. "This is not, however, the really vital quality which distinguishes them. Nothing Stanford did, except some of his songs, makes so strong an appeal, by reason of the wild natural poetry which is in them. The scoring, too, is more inspired than that of the symphonies, more full of light and shadow, of colour and glamour."

Stanford wrote that his first rhapsody "is founded on an episode in the battles of the Finns and the loves of Cuchullin and Emer," Irish folktales that inspired the poetry of W.B. Yeats. Taking the form of an orchestral scherzo that would not have been out of place in one of his symphonies, the rhapsody utilizes two Irish melodies: the battle song "Leatherbags Donnell" for its vigorous opening section and "Emer's Farewell to Cuchullin" (better known as "Londonderry Air" or "O Danny Boy") for an expansive central episode.

— Jeff Eldridge

## Ralph Vaughan Williams

### *A Sea Symphony*

Ralph (pronounced "Rafe") Vaughan Williams was born October 12, 1872, in Down Ampney, Gloucestershire, England, and died August 26, 1958, in London. He composed this symphony for chorus, orchestra and two vocal soloists between 1903 and 1909, conducting the Leeds Festival Chorus and Orchestra in the first performance on October 12, 1910.

What an impressive pedigree Ralph Vaughan Williams brought with him into the world! The youngest of three children, the composer, conductor, teacher, writer, lecturer and mentor to many younger musicians was the son of a parish rector descended from eminent lawyers. Ralph's mother was related to the famous pottery manufacturer Josiah Wedgwood and the 18th-century intellectual Erasmus Darwin. (Ralph's grandmother taught him to read using the same book with which she had tutored her younger brother, Charles Darwin.) Following his father's death in 1875, the three-year-old boy was taken by his mother to live with her family at the Wedgwood home. He began to learn the violin at the age of seven, and also studied the piano and organ and played the viola.

Vaughan Williams studied at the Royal College of Music in London with Charles Villiers Stanford, at Trinity College, Cambridge, in Berlin with the German composer Max Bruch, and in Paris with master orchestrator Maurice Ravel. (In an attempt to reign in Vaughan Williams' predilection for modal writing, Stanford tasked him with writing a waltz: "True to my creed, I showed him a modal waltz!") He became an avid collector of English folk songs, making arrangements of them and incorporating their rhythms, scales and melodic shapes into his own music. English music of the 17th century and English hymnody also exerted powerful influences on his musical language.

After military service during World War I, first in the Royal Army Medical Corps Territorial Force, where he assisted in evacuating the wounded, and later as an officer in the Royal Artillery, Vaughan Williams became professor of composition at the Royal College of Music. Always deeply interested in the English choral tradition, he conducted local choruses at the Leith Hill Music Festival and composed choral works for such events. Two years after the death of Adeline Fisher (a talented cellist and pianist who was a cousin of Virginia Woolf), his wife of 54 years, Vaughan Williams married the poet Ursula Wood, nearly 40 years his junior, whom he had met in 1938 and with whom he had enjoyed a passionate 13-year affair, apparently with his wife's assent. Ursula served as Ralph's personal assistant and literary advisor following her husband's death in 1942, moving into the Vaughan Williams' home in Surrey and taking care of Adeline, who suffered from debilitating arthritis, until her death in 1951. Ursula Vaughan Williams, who outlived her husband by 49 years, was his collaborator on a number of vocal works and later became his biographer.

Still vigorous and active two months before his 86th birthday, Vaughan Williams died in his sleep in London, having on the previous evening, according to his wife, "sat

on his bed eating bananas and biscuits and making plans for going to Walthamstow for the recording of his Ninth Symphony on the following day."

Vaughan Williams' many and varied works include nine symphonies, five operas, film scores, ballet and stage music, song cycles, church music, works for chorus and orchestra, and even a tuba concerto and a *Romance* for harmonica and strings! His finest and best-known compositions include his symphonies, the *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* for double string orchestra and *The Lark Ascending* for solo violin and orchestra.

Em Marshall, managing and artistic director of the English Music Festival, describes Vaughan Williams as "one of the truly outstanding composers of his or any age. One who had all the techniques one could wish for; who could experiment with the best of them; who rejuvenated a nation's musical life; who preserved its musical heritage; and who remained modest and unassuming throughout. This, of course, was part of his greatness." His compositions somehow not only exude the essence of "Englishness" but also exhibit timeless, visionary qualities that continue to enrapture audiences everywhere, the work you will hear this evening being one of these. "In the next world, I shan't be doing music with all the striving and disappointments," the composer said. "I shall be being it."

In 1903, Vaughan Williams began work on some songs for orchestra and chorus that, after six years, became an immense four-movement choral symphony (initially called *The Ocean*), the largest musical project he had yet attempted. In a 1907 letter to his cousin Ralph Wedgwood, Vaughan Williams expressed his concerns about its reception: "This is all about the sea and is for every conceivable voice & instrument & takes over an hour to perform — so I suppose it will now go into its drawer and remain there forever." Fortunately, this proved not to be the case! The sea-vast composition is a magnificent setting of free-verse texts from *Leaves of Grass* by the controversial humanistic American poet Walt Whitman (1819–1892). Finally titled *A Sea Symphony*, the work opened a new chapter in British choral and symphonic writing, bringing to audiences' ears the composer's freshly "English" musical language, colored by folksong and church music, and speaking to hearts worldwide.

An arresting blast from the brass section warns of the impending tsunami of choral sound that breaks upon listeners with an almost physical force as "A Song for All Seas, All Ships," based on texts from Whitman's "Song of the Exposition" and "Sea Drift," opens the symphony and commands its hearers to "Behold, the sea itself!" Two motives that appear throughout the symphony — a harmonic shift from an anxious minor chord to an exultant major chord whose foundational note is two whole-tones away from that of the previous chord, and the juxtaposition of duplet and triplet rhythmic figures — are presented immediately as the ships sail forth upon the undulating billows.

The winds and spray sweep from solo baritone to chorus, and this sea shanty is followed by a contrasting chorale-like "chant for the sailors of all nations" that surges toward

the reappearance of the initial fanfare motive and the flaunting out of the flags of the nations by the solo soprano and then by the chorus. Intricate counterpoint soon weaves the musical lines together into “one pennant universal” that waves, “emblem of man elate above death,” in tribute to all the brave souls who have been lost at sea. The baritone and chorus exalt this “one flag above all the rest,” with the soprano soon joining them to “behold the sea itself” and all its ships, shrouded in a shimmering choral mist.

In the symphony’s ruminative slow movement, with its text taken from Whitman’s “Sea Drift,” the solo baritone, stationed “On the Beach at Night Alone” (but with the chorus for company), is introduced by a dusky, inscrutable orchestral passage that leads him to contemplate the unity not only of humanity but also of time and of the entire cosmos. A chant-like lullaby leads to a brighter central section featuring a “walking bass” and swelling to a grand climax celebrating “the vast similitude” that spans and encloses all that exists. The music fades gently away as the orchestra sings those on the dark shore to sleep.

The complete text of Whitman’s “After the Sea Ship” from “Sea Drift” appears in “Scherzo: The Waves,” the *Sea Symphony*’s chorus-centered, vividly pictorial and technically challenging third movement. A fanfare, reminiscent of the symphony’s beginning, introduces a breathtakingly powerful, masterfully crafted portrait of roistering, rollicking, wind-whipped waves that surround and pursue a majestic ship as it surges across the sea and rides the towering crests of an ocean-anthem praising the “great vessel sailing.” “A motley procession” of foam-flecked billows sweeps back the movement’s opening music and follows in the wake of the ship as it suddenly vanishes from view.

Vaughan Williams sets portions of Whitman’s poem “Passage to India” in “The Explorers,” the massive finale of the *Sea Symphony* that consists of some 12 sections. The unfathomable ocean and those who sail upon it appear as a symbol of the human soul’s venturing into unknown regions in an attempt to comprehend the mysteries of the universe and to search out God. The chorus provides a solemnly flowing processional introduction that is followed by a description, chanted by the men of the chorus and answered by a questioning four-part chorus of women, of humanity’s creation and restless search for meaning. The imitative setting of the phrase, “Yet soul be sure” leads to the coming at last, in reassuring unison, of the “true son of God,” singing his ecstatic songs. A cascading instrumental interlude encourages the soul to continue its quest in a soaring, shimmering duet for baritone and soprano. The soloists are joined by exultant choral voices that, following a meditative passage for baritone and violin, are soon crying excitedly, “Away, O Soul,” to the accompaniment of scampering sea-shanty rhythms. The soul-ship sails forth on its voyage of exploration, carrying the chorus, soloists, orchestra, and listeners farther and farther into the deep waters, until, rocking peacefully upon the seas of God, it drifts softly into silence.

— Lorelette Knowles

## Vocal Texts

### The Bells of Rhymney

Oh what will you give me?  
Say the sad bells of Rhymney.  
Is there hope for the future?  
Cry the brown bells of Merthyr.  
Who made the mineowner?  
Say the black bells of Rhondda.  
And who robbed the miner?  
Cry the grim bells of Blaina.

They will plunder willy-nilly,  
Cry the bells of Caerphilly.  
They have fangs, they have teeth,  
Shout the loud bells of Neath.  
Even God is uneasy,  
Say the moist bells of Swansea.  
And what will you give me?  
Say the sad bells of Rhymney.

Put the vandals in court,  
Say the bells of Newport.  
All would be well if, if, if,  
Cry the green bells of Cardiff.  
Why so worried, sisters, why,  
Sang the silver bells of Wye.  
And what will you give me?  
Say the sad bells of Rhymney.

— Idris Davies

### All Through the Night

Sleep, my child, and peace attend thee,  
All through the night.  
Guardian angels God will send thee,  
All through the night.  
Soft the drowsy hours are creeping,  
Hill and dale in slumber deeping.  
I my loving vigil keeping,  
All through the night.

— Harold Boulton

### 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,  
Pick’d 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.

### **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 place 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.

### **The 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,  
Waves, undulating waves, liquid, uneven, emulous waves,  
Toward that whirling current, laughing and buoyant, with curves,  
Where the great vessel sailing and tacking displaced the surface,  
Larger and smaller waves in the spread of the ocean  
yearnfully flowing,  
The wake of the sea-ship after she passes, flashing and frolicsome  
under the sun,  
A motley procession with many a fleck of foam and  
many fragments,  
Following the stately and rapid ship, in the wake following.

### **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 thoughts begin 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 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 of 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 waking in the night,  
Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time and Space and Death, like  
waters flowing,  
Bear me indeed as through the 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 daring joy, but safe! Are they not all the seas of God?  
O farther, farther sail!

— Walt Whitman

**Soprano**

Barb Anderson  
 Ann Bridges  
 Sue Cobb  
 Abigail Owens Cooper  
 Crissa Cugini  
 Kyla DeRemer  
 Cinda Freece  
 Peggy Kurtz §  
 Lindsey Long  
 Kathleen Sankey

**Alto**

Sharon Agnew  
 Julia Akoury-Thiel  
 Cheryl Blackburn  
 Jane Blackwell  
 Deanna Fryhle  
 Pamela Ivezić  
 Ellen Kaisse  
 Lorelette Knowles  
 Theodora Letz  
 Lila Woodruff May  
 Laurie Medill §  
 Cathrine Morrison  
 Valeria Riedemann  
 Annie Thompson

**Tenor**

Alex Chun  
 Ralph Cobb  
 Jon Lange §  
 Tom Nesbitt  
 Victor Royer  
 David Zapolsky

**Bass**

Timothy Braun  
 Andrew Danilchik  
 Stephen Keeler  
 Dennis Moore  
 Byron Olivier  
 Steven Tachell  
 Skip Viau  
 Rob Waring  
 Richard Wyckoff §

**Violin**

Dean Drescher  
 Karen Frankenfeld  
 Grant Hanner  
 Alexander Hawker  
 Jason Hershey  
 Manchung Ho  
 Emmy Hoech  
 Fritz Klein\*\*  
 Gregor Nitsche  
 Susan Ovens  
 Stephen Provine\*  
 Davis Reed  
 Theo Schaad  
 Lily Shababi  
 Janet Showalter  
 Kenna Smith-Shangrow  
 June Spector

**Viola**

Deborah Daoust  
 Lauren Lamont  
 Katherine McWilliams  
 Emily O'Leary  
 Stephanie Read  
 Rebecca Rodman  
 Sam Williams\*

**Cello**

Dahae Cheong  
 Peter Ellis  
 Christy Johnson  
 Patricia Lyon  
 Katie Sauter Messick  
 Valerie Ross  
 Matthew Wyant\*

**Bass**

Jo Hansen  
 Ericka Kendall  
 Kevin McCarthy  
 Steven Messick\*  
 Chris Simison

**Flute**

Virginia Knight  
 Shari Muller-Ho\*

**Oboe**

Susan Jacoby  
 Rebecca Rice\*

**Clarinet**

Steven Noffsinger\*  
 Chris Peterson

**Bassoon**

Jeff Eldridge\*  
 Lesley Petty Jones

**Contrabassoon**

Michel Jolivet

**French Horn**

Barney Blough  
 Laurie Heidt\*  
 Jim Hendrickson  
 Sue Perry

**Trumpet**

Rabi Lahiri  
 Sarah Weinberger  
 Janet Young\*

**Trombone**

Cuauhtemoc Escobedo\*  
 Chad Kirby  
 Jim Hattori

**Tuba**

David Brewer

**Timpani**

Dan Oie

**Percussion**

Ginny Bear  
 Kathie Flood  
 Jenny Gray

**Harp**

Catherine Case

**Organ**

Paul Tegels

\*\* *concertmaster*

\* *principal*

§ *section leader*