

## Guidance on AMustTCL for candidates and teachers

### Section B – Prescribed Works

What follows is by way of example of how to set about the study of prescribed works for Section B of this examination. The syllabus for 2009 and beyond specifies a symphony by Schubert and a choral work by Stravinsky. In the following notes I explore two works broadly similar to these: a symphony by Haydn and a choral work by Vaughan Williams. Elsewhere you are advised to develop a broad general knowledge of musical history from the early Baroque through to modern times. By working through the notes that follow you will be adding to that general knowledge as well as gaining insight into two interesting and attractive works, both of which hold important places in the repertoire.

#### Before you begin

For AMustTCL you **must** have your own copy of the score in the version specified in the syllabus (e.g. miniature score, study score, from Boosey & Hawkes Masterworks Library). If the score is published without the bars numbered, you **must** write them in yourself, beginning afresh for each movement. When I do this I write the number on each fifth bar using a red ball point pen so the numbers stand out clearly. I am sorry if I seem to be starting by making a fuss or being pedantic, but you must not confuse bar numbers with rehearsal letters or numbers. The score of the *Symphony of Psalms* has rehearsal numbers for each movement, the first on page 148 at the beginning of bar 9. **You must write in the bar numbers as I have already described**, beginning afresh on page 162 for the second movement and again on page 173 for the third<sup>1</sup>. If you do not do this you will waste much time in the exam because the questions will refer to specific bars by their numbers within a particular movement.

During your study preparing for the exam you must not write anything else on the score. This is because you will need it in the examination room in a completely unmarked state, apart from bar numberings. If the supervisor finds any marks on your score, even though you may have erased things written in pencil, you will be disqualified.

Therefore, once your score has the bar numbers, make a photocopy of each page and put these photocopies in a loose leaf folder, interleaving each page of music with a sheet of file paper. Do all your work on the photocopied pages and file paper.

The advantages of working in this way are

- You are sure your score is completely free from marks – even grooves made by a pencil and left behind after erasing
- Your photocopy of the score which you use for all your study looks just like the original which you will use in the exam – important if you have a visual memory
- You retain all your study materials
- As your study materials increase in bulk you can add further sheets of file paper wherever you need them in your loose leaf folder

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<sup>1</sup> To reassure you, there are 78 bars in the first movement, 88 in the second and 212 in the third.

Leave your file at home when you go to the examination, taking only your unmarked score. Under no circumstances may you use any sort of photocopy in the examination.

### **First things first**

Whatever music you are going to study, and for whatever purpose, you must first get to know it. This may seem so obvious as to be condescending, but experience shows that all too often students begin their study of a particular work by finding out what has already been said about it. They surf the internet, they pore over books, they do all they can to fill their heads with second hand opinions rather than go straight to the music and make its acquaintance.

I am not saying you should not research other people's opinions of the music, simply that doing this should not be your first priority.

I always prefer to begin my exploration of a new work by looking through the score to see what are the main features.

- How many movements are there?
- For what resources is the work written?
- Does each movement use the same resources?
- If there are words, what are they about?
- If the words are in a foreign language, is it one I know? If not, is there a translation in the score and if so, what sort of translation is it?
- If I already know one or more similar works by this composer can I see any similarities?

Then I set about finding out what the music sounds like. I may play through the score on the piano, but some musical styles do not really lend themselves to a straightforward score reading exercise. Therefore, I might choose to play phrases and fragments rather than try to reproduce the entire texture. Then again, it might seem better to begin by going through the score mentally, imagining the sounds. One way or another I try to make the music become part of me.

After this I might sit down and listen several times to a recording of the music. Having already tried to put at least some of the music into my head, when I hear the recording the music should sound familiar.

Only when I feel I know the music quite well do I set about analysing it, beginning with general outlines and gradually taking in more and more detail.

As I said at the beginning, the syllabus for 2009 includes two works to be studied from the score: a symphony by Schubert and a choral work by Stravinsky. I have chosen two works which are similar in some ways to these. What follows takes you through important stages in the process of studying them preparatory to taking an exam at the level of AMusTCL. Of course, no two works are exactly similar so you must not follow slavishly every detail in what follows. However, the methods used apply generally.

## Symphony no. 98 in B♭ major – Haydn

I have chosen this particular work because it's in the same key as the Schubert symphony which is prescribed. However, this symphony by Haydn was written after he had accumulated a great deal of experience and wisdom as a composer and in particular as a composer of symphonies. Haydn had a reputation across Europe as a composer of genius and wrote this work in response to a commission from the London impresario, Salaman. It is one of the group called the 'London Symphonies' and was written in 1792.

If you are preparing to answer the orchestration question in Section A you will find much to gain from study of this symphony: another reason for my choice. Too many students weaken their study by failing to make connections between the different elements of exam preparation.

I have written these notes using the Dover edition (first published in 1997, ISBN 0-486-29754-3). The symphony begins on page 249. Bars are already numbered every tenth bar.

There are four movements beginning respectively on pages 249, 269, 280 and 286. The instrumentation is flute, 2 oboes and 2 bassoons; 2 horns in B♭ and 2 trumpets in B♭; timpani in B♭ and F; violins I and II, violas, cellos and double basses. In the second movement trumpets and timpani are not used and the horns are in F. The full complement returns for the remaining movements and the brass are in B♭ again.

The first movement begins with a short Adagio followed by an Allegro. Next comes the slow movement, marked *Adagio cantabile*. Then a Menuetto and Trio, marked *Allegro*, followed by the Finale, Presto.

Having looked at the overall structure of the work, let us get down to some detail, taking each movement in turn.<sup>2</sup>

### first movement

A quick glance through the movement reveals that there is a brief slow introduction followed by a lengthy Allegro. There are repeat marks from the beginning of the fast music and a double bar at bar 131. The entire movement has 320 bars and there is no repeat marked for the section from bar 132 onwards.

The opening Adagio is in  $\frac{4}{4}$  time and the Allegro in  $\frac{2}{2}$ .

The introduction begins with a rising arpeggio figure in long notes followed by a zigzag descending pattern in crotchets followed by a *fortissimo* repeated chord: semiquaver and crotchet, then a pause. All this occupies four bars. The next four bars repeat the rhythm of the first four and have a similar melodic contour. The dynamic level is *piano* and then the repeated chords *pianissimo*. Such a wide range of dynamics within a short space would seem very unusual in 1792.

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<sup>2</sup> I have assumed that you are already fully acquainted with the conventions of classical symphonic writing through having followed a course in musical history and analysis. Your study of prescribed works should be done against a background of music history covering the period from the Baroque to the present day.

Bar 9 resumes the loud dynamic for what seems like a third appearance of the pattern but there are no zigzag crotchets this time. The music continues to rise through a trill before falling a diminished 7th. The fourth group of four bars uses a dotted rhythm for repeated chords and then an assertive and richly scored chord of F major, a rest and a more compactly scored form of the same chord.

So much for rhythm, dynamics and shape. What of tonality and instrumentation? So far we have heard only the strings (and will continue to do so for the first statement of the first subject in the ensuing Allegro). The key of the whole work is B $\flat$  major. But, as is often the case with a slow, dramatic opening in a classical symphony, we begin in a minor key with chromatic coloration. Also, the rising arpeggios begin low, the violins playing their first notes on the rich toned G string. The violas and cellos may also play on the G string, but for these instruments this is the third string. Double basses have to begin on their third string, too, tuned to A.

The effect of this short introduction is truly dramatic and we hear how Haydn benefited from his years working in the theatre as well as the concert hall at Esterhazy. We are left, however, with a very clear indication that the coming Allegro will be in B $\flat$ .

The greatest part of the first movement is a sonata-allegro, beginning with the first subject closely resembling bars 1-4 of the Adagio: a rising arpeggio of the tonic chord (now in the tonic major, of course) followed by zigzagging crotchets see-sawing back to the first note of the arpeggio. As with the Adagio, so now the Allegro moves in octaves, both violins and violas in unison, cellos and double basses providing doubling at the lower octave and double octave.

If this seems predictable and even boring then I advise you to suspend judgement for a little while! Haydn knows just how far to go with such a simple use of the material from the slow introduction; in bar 19 he has some two-part counterpoint where the second violins repeat the earlier zigzag crotchets while the first violins play a new cadential figure in a higher octave. Then, in an extension, cellos and basses play the zigzag and, a bar or two later, the first violins have this while seconds and then violas have simple contrapuntal supporting phrases.

First oboe and first bassoon begin in bar 27, oboe doubling first violins an octave higher and bassoon doubling the viola in unison. Students of orchestration should note this detail of the scoring. The harmony has a couple of mild chromatic colourations and then we reach a strong and repeated tonic chord in bar 32 and hear the full band for the first time.

Thus we see how Haydn creates a clear texture using very simple melodic and harmonic materials; creating music that is novel and interesting, but readily understood – just what the audiences in London in the 1790s wished to hear.

Moving along rather more quickly, we find in bar 59 that the theme of bars 16 (*ff*) now appear in F major, the dominant. From your background knowledge of musical history you should know that in the classical symphony the sonata-allegro movements often had only one theme. The main interest lies in the way in which the composer creates a sense of contest between different keys and particularly the tonic and dominant keys. Having noted that the second subject is a transposed version of the first, we shall be wise to look closely at how Haydn uses the keys in

this movement. Are they, perhaps rather like two characters in a drama, each trying to hold our attention and gain the upper hand? I have already referred in passing to Haydn's great experience writing for the theatre. His operas are little known these days but the evidence of Haydn's ability to write dramatic music is readily found in his symphonic writing.<sup>3</sup> Now we need to look back a little way.

After the repeated tonic chords in bar 32 is a lengthy passage in which Haydn seems to be doing nothing very much. Some scale passages, some twiddly bits and lots of repeated notes for the strings while the other instruments play sustained notes, sometimes lasting for several bars. Despite the appearance that nothing much is happening, Haydn is working purposefully throughout this passage, driving into the listeners' musical understanding the pre-eminence of the tonic key. He is setting up the outcome of the forthcoming tonal contest. We are, after all, in the classical era and the tonic key **must** win! When the symphony was written the French Revolution was literally just around the corner but there was no place for anarchy in Haydn's aesthetic. I say something in the guidance on Section C about learning music through our ears. In Haydn's day public concerts were attended by a growing middle class whose members expected to be able to follow the flow of the musical argument in a new work without being mystified. Hence the need for passages such as bars 33-45, after which Haydn steers the music away from the tonic towards the dominant key, which is heralded by a four-bar dominant pedal from bar 55.

I have treated the first subject in some detail to show you the sort of thing you need to be able to do when you are learning a new piece of music. I have blended background knowledge, knowledge gained from studying other Haydn symphonies and knowledge gained from careful, close study of this symphony. Everything is verifiable by reference to this score, other scores or other documents.

The remainder of the exposition continues to bar 130. We shall look at some of the detail but rather more briefly than for the first subject.

At the end of bar 45 the second violins move from playing D and F within a chord of B $\flat$  major to D and F $\sharp$ , giving a transition into G minor, the relative minor of B $\flat$  major. Note the continuing pedal B $\flat$  and if you are not quite sure how to explain this procedure remind yourself of the rules for pedals by consulting one of the standard books on harmony<sup>4</sup>. This key remains until the second half of the second beat of bar 49 where V<sup>7</sup>d in F is followed by Ib in bar 50. We have reached the dominant via a transition but, unlike the previous one into G minor, there is no ambiguity here.

From the second half of the second beat of bar 50 we have a brief passage in octaves with some diversionary chromatics leading to the dominant pedal preparation for the second subject at bar 59.

Take a good look at the second subject and compile a list of ways in which it resembles the first subject; then make a second list of ways in which it differs.

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<sup>3</sup> You are strongly recommended to explore this matter further. A good source of information is Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style* (London: Faber and Faber) Revised Edition 1976, a book that should be in the personal library of every serious music student.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Macpherson, *Melody & Harmony* Appendix A, pp. 260-261; Pratt, *Dynamics of Harmony* p.131; Piston, *Harmony*, pp 244-245. Full details of these and other resources are given in the Reading List, a separate item on the website.

Then ask yourself how long the second subject lasts and whether there is a closing figure making a codetta. What is the basis for your decision here?<sup>5</sup>

The development begins at bar 132 and the key appears to be D major, but are we correct in thinking that, just because the first subject climbs the tonic chord, we are climbing a tonic chord in bars 132 and 133? In bar 133 the first violin moves among notes of the chord of G minor. Have we arrived here from the dominant of G minor rather than the tonic of D major? Bassoon and second violin have B $\flat$  followed by C $\sharp$ : minor sixth (an unusual note) and major seventh in D major or minor third and augmented fourth (an unusual note) in G minor. But which are they? By way of answer Haydn repeats bars 134 and 135 and then makes as if to do so again but settles on a sustained D,<sup>6</sup> followed by three *fortissimo* crotchet D's before climbing a chord of E $\flat$  major. What a tease! Students of orchestration may notice that horns and trumpets cannot join in this particular prank.

I will leave you to work through the remainder of the development. There is plenty for you to discover and enjoy.

The recapitulation comes at bar 209 with a *tutti* arpeggio of B $\flat$  major. Note the dynamic is only *forte*; Haydn is full of fun but the humour has elegance and refinement. He does not gratuitously assault us with the return to the tonic (for which our ears should have been waiting expectantly for some time).

A couple of final questions for you now: is there a credible second subject in the recapitulation and is there a coda? I leave you to decide these for yourself and then convince your teacher that you have plausible answers.

Before we continue to the other movements, you might discern from what I have said about the first movement that a possible line of questioning might be about ambiguity, e.g. Is everything clear cut about the structure of the first movement of Haydn's Symphony no. 98? To answer such a question first decide whether you wish to say, 'yes', 'no' or 'not entirely'. Then produce evidence from the music to defend your view. On no account should you simply write out a formal analysis of the movement and then round off with a sentence such as 'Therefore everything is . . . about the structure of the first movement of Haydn's Symphony no. 98'. Such an answer would not pass.

## The second movement

What a wonderful piece this is! How remarkable that after having already written so much music of great quality Haydn still had important things to say. No suggestion here of a tired old man churning out pot boilers! More than this, though, we see here clear evidence of Haydn's skill as a composer of music for drama, for this is truly music of the highest operatic quality. It is not for musical reasons that Haydn's considerable output of opera is largely unknown in modern times but

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<sup>5</sup> Do **not** ask your teacher about this until you have decided for yourself. Then, of course, you should check with your teacher and maybe discuss your reasons for your decision. Above all, **do not** follow what is written in any analysis you find published in a book, record notes or on the internet. Decide for yourself on the basis of what you find in the music. If you then agree with what is published, well and good; the analysis is yours and far more valuable to you than anything you gain from second hand work.

<sup>6</sup> You may recall Haydn uses a similar ploy in the opening Adagio.

because the plot lines and dramatic content would have little appeal to 20th and 21st century audiences.

Marked *Adagio cantabile*, Haydn writes in F major, the dominant key, without trumpets or timpani. This key gives the potential for a sense of brightness within the prevailing B♭ major of the symphony as a whole. The triple pulse allows the music to flow gently, even when moving, as at the very opening, in whole beats.

What could be simpler than the first two bars? Yet right away Haydn adds the interesting detail of the viola playing higher than the second violin. Notice also the articulation and bowing required of the viola. A perfect cadence in bar 2 and an imperfect in bar 4 might surprise you<sup>7</sup>, but here we see in miniature the working out of the enlightenment ideal of clarity of purpose: first state the key and create in the audience an assurance of the tonal basis of the movement. Only then can ambiguity be enjoyed for what it is: something quite different from confusion, let alone anarchy. Remember the date of composition (1792) and its closeness to the dire events of 1789. Remember, too, that there were great and justifiable fears that something similar might happen in England. There is a message of political reassurance here.

We have stated the key in bars 1 and 2, and then 'spread our wings' very modestly in bars 3 and 4. Bars 5 and 6 have a small burst of sound and we hear the full texture of the ensemble with horns and winds, the phrase ending on viib. This appears to be repeated, but in bar 8 we have an abrupt move to the subdominant which is equally abruptly quitted for the tonic in bars 9 and 10. This 'spreading of wings' continues from bar 11 with a brief visit to D minor and then in bar 14 an imperfect cadence in C major, the dominant. Thus we are prepared for new material, a second subject.

A new key and a new texture from bar 15 and we have four bars of lyrical beauty and the utmost simplicity of harmony: tonic and dominant in C major. All the more delightful, then, is the arrival in bar 19 on a dominant seventh in D major. A short sequence moves D: V<sup>7</sup>-I; C: V<sup>7</sup>-I, each cadential progression occupying a single bar. C major is then confirmed with iib-Ic-V<sup>7</sup>-I over two bars. We were merely toying with D major.

However, this toying was delightful and so it is repeated, as is the two bar progression. However, this time we leap straight into an assertively scored move to A♭ major. What delightful symmetry! Our (albeit brief) visit to D major took us down a minor third from the tonic F major; now we have moved up a minor third from F to A♭ major. Our musical structure parallels a Palladian façade.

Just as we had I-V-V-I in C major in bars 15-18 we now have those chords in A♭ major in bars 30-33. The melodic figuration is new and more elaborate than hitherto and the accompanying figuration is now in semiquaver triplets where it had previously been simple semiquavers. This style continues as Haydn works through some chromatic shifts. Note the 'almost-hemiola' in bar 45. From bar 46 there is a three-bar pedal on A implying a dominant preparation for D (major or minor) but in the event comes a recapitulation of the opening from bar 49, with a flowing cello part replacing the previous tread of crotchets for viola, cello and bass.

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<sup>7</sup> You might expect these in the reverse order: imperfect first, then perfect.

This recapitulation is somewhat shortened but Haydn re-uses the modulating sequence. From its second appearance this time, in bar 67, he moves to B♭ major, ending on a whispered first inversion in bar 70. Then into a coda, safely in the tonic and making reference to earlier ideas including the *fortissimo* with which the move to A♭ major was engineered in bars 26-29. From this short burst in bar 78 the music quickly subsides to a final *pianissimo* pizzicato. Delightful from first to last!

So what is the form of this movement? I suggest it is a variant of the sonata principle commonly used in first movements. The section in A♭ major combines the function of development (triplets in place of simple semiquavers) and also provides completely new material (the decorated first violin part). Returning to my point earlier about stability and confidence, we have had a more conventional example of the sonata principle in the first movement; now Haydn shows us a little of how this principle might be exploited in new ways. We find similar structures in Beethoven and some analysts use the term sonata-rondo for them.

If this symphony were prescribed it is quite likely that questions might be asked about the structure of the second movement. On no account would it be acceptable to write out a straight analysis because the question will always ask about some aspect of the music and its structure may play a part in your answer. An example might be:

**'Discuss how Haydn uses ideas of symmetry in the second movement of the Symphony no. 98.'**

To answer this you would need to use only those portions of the music where some sort of symmetry occurs. For a good mark you would need to go beyond mere description and appraise the effect of symmetry, how surprising or satisfying it is and why.

### **The third movement**

Although straightforward, this minuet and trio are not without special character. The entire orchestra plays the minuet; horns, trumpets and timpani are silent during the trio; nothing unusual about that. The music begins by stepping confidently with one harmony per bar for a melody which falls via harmony notes. After four bars Haydn builds an extension so that we move into a modulation to the dominant (viib-I in bars 7-8, confirmed with a full V<sup>7</sup>-I in bars 11-12). From there to the double bar we have some chromatics and then V<sup>7</sup>-I three times with wide stepping in the upper strings also using the upward double acciaccature from bars 1 and 2. All in all Haydn uses detail to inject a little levity into what might otherwise be a conventional and rather prim movement.

In the second section of the minuet Haydn explores imitative possibilities of motifs from earlier. Students of classical harmony and counterpoint have much to learn from the ways Haydn slightly varies the intervals in the different melodic strands here. Suggestion is his intention rather than quotation: altogether more subtle and interesting.

How do you explain the uses of the chord of A♭ major from bar 25? We have been in C minor for a couple of bars and now we have a major chord on the flattened 6th. Although it is in root position, do you feel a sense of the Neapolitan? We learn the

Neapolitan 6th as a chromatic move from the chord Ib, but the same move can happen from the dominant. Here we have something that is neither conventional tonic or dominant but a 6/4 on G. What we learn from our harmony studies is often less that the full picture of how composers have used resources.

Alternatively, you may feel this move to a chord of A $\flat$  is an attempt at an augmented chord that has gone astray, resulting in a plain root position triad. Look on and you soon reach a conventional V $\flat$ -I in A $\flat$ . Was bar 25 simply the start of a gradual modulation? After all, chord vi is not at all unusual; followed by V $\flat$  in the new key and then I, we have a very smooth effect overall.

Maybe the music moves so quickly that all this doubt about the harmonic status of bar 25 has no time to materialise before we feel safely embedded in the key of A $\flat$  major. Is all this discussion of different possibilities not just academic prattle? I think not; it shows that although when we first hear the music it may seem quite plain and simple, beneath the surface there lie more elaborate possibilities which, with careful study, add interest to the music and increase our enjoyment as we listen repeatedly. It also serves to show us something of the genius of Haydn that he could hide such cleverness within seeming simplicity.

At bar 41 we return to the music of bar 1 but from bar 45 onwards there are many significant differences from what happens at the beginning of the movement and you should list them carefully. They arise principally because here we are moving towards the end of the minuet, which is in the tonic key, whereas at the beginning we are moving away from the tonic towards the dominant key.

The trio is 20 bars shorter than the minuet and begins softly for 8 bars. The harmony, with the utmost classical simplicity, traverses that most routine progression: I-IV-V-I, but Haydn gives character to the music by having the bassoon double the first violin an octave lower (or is it *vice-versa*?) and there are some chromatic delicacies to savour as well.

After the double bar the dynamic rises to *forte*, the texture simplifies to bare octaves and we move along in flowing quavers. But not for long! We soon enter the most delicate texture so far in this double movement and with chromatic ornamentation now familiar, we arrive in the dominant at bar 85.

In the remaining 17 bars of the trio there is a two-bar fill and then from the upbeat to bar 88 is a slight elaboration of the opening and a brief coda, ending *pianissimo*, leading to the *da capo* of the minuet.

Looking back over this double movement a number of areas for questioning come to mind, including harmony, counterpoint, instrumentation, dynamic variety and contrast, phrase structure and the use/re-use of motifs. All of these lend themselves equally to short answer questions or to discussion style.

An excerpt question might be:

**'Compare the first and second violin parts from the last beat of bar 20 to the end of bar 24.'**

They begin with canonic imitation, the second violin leaping up an octave then descending a third, then a second and another second; the first violin leaping up a

sixth then descending a third and a fourth. Thereafter they are in unison descending the notes of the chord of C minor.

An essay might ask for discussion of the role of the flute in the minuet, the extent to which it shadows other parts and to which it is independent of other parts. The answer might be enhanced with passing reference, by way of comparison, to flute parts in the minuets of one or two other symphonies by Haydn. However, the question would not specify this because, while we advise candidates to have a wide background knowledge, the syllabus specifies particular works only. It should be noted however, that well-taught pupils invariably cover more than the requirements of an examination syllabus.

### The fourth movement

At 386 bars, the final movement may be reckoned the longest of the four. Like the first movement it is in duple time but here we have a sparkling and witty *Giga*.

Taking what should by now be our habitual quick glance through the music we notice a double bar with repeat sign at bar 146 where the cadence is clearly in the dominant. Then a surprise in bar 149: a violin solo down to bar 181. A further solo runs from bars 210-239. There are no further such passages. We also notice the tempo change at the upbeat to 328 where the music makes as if to re-use the opening but not for long. A more thorough going re-use of the opening is at the upbeat to bar 365. Having reduced the tempo a little following the pause in bar 327, Haydn soon introduces bustling semiquavers for the first time in this movement, thereby using notation to create the sense of *più mosso* in the way that in a later era Brahms often emulated. Haydn might by now be in the final pages of this symphony but there is no sense of a reduction in his ingenuity and inventiveness.

Having flicked over the pages of this movement, let us find more detail in what on first acquaintance looks an interesting and somewhat unusual finale, quite the match for the previous movements.

As we might expect, Haydn calls for the full ensemble that he used in the first movement, though just as there he begins with only the strings and with a very simple texture and two chords per bar for most of the first phrase. This is repeated with first oboe having the melody previously given to first violins. We then have a *tutti* in which several fragments are repeated before finishing with a bold gesture making an imperfect cadence.

The dynamic falls away and a very tentative link takes us into a lengthy section in the dominant. There are several different melodic ideas and occasional brief forays into other keys, e.g. G minor in bars 47 and 48. It may be argued that the bass B $\flat$  in bar 49 is no more than a chromatic passing note taking us to the dominant of F, resolved eventually on the tonic of F major in bar 52, but there can be little doubt that bars 60 to 62 are a modulation to C major, quickly contradicted as we climb the notes of a dominant 7th in F. Looking a little further on, what happens in bars 72 and 73? This is a 6/4 on B $\flat$  but it goes on to V<sup>7</sup>d in F and then Ib. A rather unusual chromatic passing 6/4 using the leading note chord; something to put in

your notebook of unconventional uses of commonplace moves; something to avoid in your own harmonic work unless there really is no other possibility<sup>8</sup>.

As you study this passage in increasingly greater detail, look carefully at how Haydn has written for the brass and woodwind; look at the doublings and ask yourself why he has done things the way he has. It is instructive to compare the writing from the upbeat to bar 76 onwards with what follows bar 102. The first of these two passages has flute double first violins in unison and the chatter of other string parts matched by sustained notes for winds and brass. In the second passage flute has an inverted pedal that is unique to itself. Meanwhile first oboe doubles some of the first violin music at the octave.

Now we turn to the section where the solo violin appears. Not only do we have a new timbre, we also have a new key: A $\flat$  major. I have written earlier about Haydn's use of this key. Not surprisingly, here he goes about things in a quite different way! A $\flat$  major proves to be the launch pad for a whole range of keys, all of them exotic by the conventions of the late 18th century. Horns and trumpets cannot join in until the *fortissimo* chord of A minor at bar 178. Further harmonic exploration takes place until eventually, in bar 208, we pause on a unison D, wondering whether there has been a dominant preparation going on during the previous 10 bars.

The second entrance of the solo violin is only a little less surprising than the first. This time we jump on to E $\flat$ , but not for long. Despite the chromatic detail, from bar 217 the music gently makes its way back to the tonic and a recapitulation of the opening, though with the solo violin playing what was originally played by the first violins.

As frequently happens, this reprise is shortened, so after only 8 bars we have the *tutti* that took 16 bars to reach in the exposition. Much of the ensuing music repeats that from earlier in the movement, but now in the tonic rather than the dominant. Compare from bar 263 onwards with from bar 64 onwards. In such instances it is as important to know where sections replicate one another exactly as to know where they have slight differences<sup>9</sup>.

From bar 298 it might seem that Haydn is heading directly for the end of the movement but he has a mighty interrupted cadence in bar 321. Then, after two further short phrases separated by a powerful silence, comes the *Più moderato* and the coda. A quite big finish but after all, this has proved to be quite a big symphony in many ways.

Following on from this, an obvious question for discussion would be about how well the final movement matches the scale and substance of the previous movements. An excerpt question might ask for a comparison of the detail in bars 1-8 with bars 364-376 to which an answer might be:

'In bars 1-8 there are single notes for second violin, viola and basses but in the later passage the harmony is much fuller. Also, these fuller textures are played pizzicato.

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<sup>8</sup> My point is that in your harmonic work you should always seek to use the commonplace; that is what the great composers have done most of the time, as you see exemplified in almost every bar of this wonderful symphony. What proportion of this symphony uses unconventional harmonic progressions? A small fraction of 1%. Such a small fraction transferred to your harmony exercises would be impossible to represent!

<sup>9</sup> Look back to the minuet and what is said about the imitative writing that follows the double bar at bar 20.

The later passage has an extension by repeating bars 369-372. It also has dynamic changes from bar 369 where none are specified in the opening bars of the movement.'

I hope you have enjoyed this exploration of a wonderful example of Haydn's later work. He still had much important music to write, including both *The Creation* and *The Seasons* but we have been looking at a work of sheer genius and if, as I hope, you have the time for further study you will quickly discover that we have scarcely scratched the surface in what we have said so far.

## **Toward the Unknown Region – Vaughan Williams**

I have chosen this work because it is from the 20th century and is written for choir. There will be strong similarities between the way I approach this music and the way you might approach the Stravinsky which is prescribed from 2009.

I am using the revised edition of the vocal score published by Stainer & Bell.

Unfortunately, the full score is available only to hire from the publishers. The work was composed in 1905 and revised in 1918.

### **So, what are the main features?**

The work is in one movement but there are several clearly marked sections. Also, on the back cover, the text, by Walt Whitman, is set out in five stanzas.

The score states that the work is for chorus and orchestra. There is no indication anywhere on the piano reduction of which instruments are playing.

The words are poetic and philosophical. Apart from the word, 'soul', there is nothing specifically religious (i.e. nothing which links the words to any particular religious creed or theological standpoint). However, the general tenor of the text does clearly invite the reader/listener to venture into the unknown. Whether the unknown is a physical location or some idea or vision is not made clear.

Walt Whitman was an American writer of great originality. He wrote in English but his poetic forms were his own invention. Vaughan Williams set Whitman's words on other occasions, notably in the *Sea Symphony*. In the final movement of the symphony the listener is invited to sail further, a similar idea to that of venturing into the unknown. It might be helpful to get to know this work as it was composed about the same time at *Toward the Unknown Region*.

### **Beginning to get to know the work**

Now to play through the music; in this case it's quite easy as I'm using a vocal score. After several attempts I can comfortably incorporate both the voice parts and the piano reduction into something manageable. I must emphasise that although it is helpful to have fluency on the keyboard, every instrumentalist can, with persistence, get to know the music via his/her instrument.

Immediately I notice that we are not in a major or minor key. By the end of the work we are in F major and there is a key signature with one flat at the beginning. Nevertheless, it would be misleading to talk of keys in the way we might with a work from the 18th or 19th centuries.

We begin with a rich progression of chords lasting for 3 bars. Two minor 7th chords are followed by a minor triadic chord then two more 7th chords and a bare octave. Only one of these chords is in root position: the fourth in the progression, coming on the first beat of the second bar. The dynamic is soft and with a *diminuendo*. A pause separates this opening progression from what follows: a repeat of the progression at a lower pitch. This time the bare octave is replaced with a rhythmically insistent treble note supported by quicker bass notes which seem to search for the octave for six bars before finding it. At this moment the chorus begins on the same octave, inviting us to walk out toward the unknown region.

It is much too soon to set about a detailed analysis, I am still dealing with first impressions. However, this opening has had a striking effect on my entry into the work as a whole and I have decided to set it down. It is for reasons such as this that I encourage you to get to know the music for yourself in the first instance and only afterwards explore what others think and say about it.

The first stanza is set syllabically and the chorus sings homophonically. The tonal focus seems to be D. In the interlude before the second stanza there are time changes and a rising/falling arpeggio figure appears in the bass; it is used considerably in the ensuing music. As the chorus begins again there are several more time changes before the music settles back to  $\frac{4}{4}$  time. The music is chromatic and the texture of the choral writing becomes quite complex with imitative entries in diminution.

The interlude before the third stanza includes the melody of bars 1-3 but with quite different harmony. The voices use the music for stanza 1 for the first line of the new words, but with a richer texture. Then comes imitative counterpoint leading to a section based in E $\flat$  and then very soft chords of A major, and later G major, with all but tenors divided, giving a very rich choral texture.

The entire work has a few more than 200 bars. The two-bar introduction to the music for the fourth stanza, which begins at bar 98, uses an adaptation of bars 1 to 3 but ends on a chord of F major. However, the question of key is still not without ambiguity. If we view the music as if it were in F major the previous accented chord would be vi<sup>7</sup>. Then, by means of passing notes, we have what would be vii<sup>7</sup>. This progression is a long way from the clear pointing of dominant and tonic harmony, the familiar means by which a key is established.

This fourth stanza occupies 12 or 13 bars, depending on which voice part is taken as the definitive one. There is no interlude prefacing the fifth and final stanza; it begins assertively in the bass as soprano, alto and tenor conclude the fourth stanza. The musical contour of the fourth stanza is largely a rising one and there is some rich harmony.

After the relatively brief settings of the first four stanzas the final one begins with each voice in turn singing a loud, sustained note. All then unite on a unison F (basses sing *ad lib.*) moving to a unison C supported by a 6/4 chord of F from the orchestra. At last Vaughan Williams is beginning to come clean about intending F as the tonic.

The next hint comes with a sustained pedal C from bar 163. The effect is very exciting and when, at bar 169 there begins a pedal E $\flat$  giving a V<sup>7</sup>d feel of moving to the subdominant of F, the excitement increases. Vaughan Williams has surprises in store, however, when he slips via a brief bass D to a sustained D $\flat$  with an augmented fifth and a major sixth. No greasy Victorian chromatic slithering here but bold movement away from the previously clear indications of F major.

In bars 180 and 181 we move from a 6/4 on C to one on B $\flat$ . Highly irregular but the effect given to the word, 'joy' is very emotive and powerful. And so we reach the final bars and, as the choir sings 'them to fulfil', the harmony is at last settled where it was always going to settle, though the route taken has been

Vaughan Williams' unique and personally carved route, wrought from the common materials of harmonic vocabulary put together in ways hitherto unknown.

These are my initial thoughts as I begin to acquaint myself with this work. You will notice that some of my observations imply familiarity with a range of other works by Vaughan Williams as well as works written in the previous century. Whenever you study a particular work you should be able to place it in its context, drawing on your general experience of music gained throughout the years of your study.

### Study in detail

*Towards the Unknown Region* is a choral work so now it is time to take a close look at the text Vaughan Williams has chosen to set. It was first published in 1868 and in its final version it came out in 1881. Although you do not need to spend time researching the publishing history of any text whose musical setting you study, if you happen to have time, interest and access to resources there is no reason why you should not.

Whitman's poetry was published in *Leaves of Grass* which appeared in various editions over the years and as time passed more and more poetry was included. Within *Leaves* the poems were grouped and *Towards the Unknown Region* is the opening poem in 'Whispers of Heavenly Death.' This collection contains 18 poems and you may care to read them all and reflect on why Vaughan Williams chose as he did to make his setting<sup>10</sup>.

In your earlier studies you may have learned how to set words to music. Very well, have a go at setting the first stanza of this poem. Try not to be influenced by what you know of Vaughan Williams's setting but see if you can discover what challenges lie within the task of composing music to match these words. From searching on the web I have found that several other composers have written settings of *Towards the Unknown Region*, none of which I have ever come across. If you can locate a copy of one or more of these settings you might find it instructive to compare your attempts with what you find there.

I am suggesting all this so as to help you get further into the text and how it relates to music. Any worthwhile setting of words will show a close relationship between aspects of those words and the music that goes with them. There are many ways in which this might be and now we must explore some of them in the music of Vaughan Williams.

The setting of the first stanza occupies 9 bars. It begins with unison for, 'Darest thou now, O soul' where the rhythm of a crotchet, two quavers then two crotchets and a minim is not quite the simplest. If there were quavers for 'now, O' the questions posed by the poet would flow too easily and could pass unnoticed. Having crotchets here causes us to heed and think about the question: dare I accompany the speaker towards the unknown region?

Later in this same phrase, the rhythm for 'unknown' is much more involved than anything previously in the music. Then, after a brief rest, the phrase, 'where neither ground is' has a return to homophonic singing but what a surprise when we hear a

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<sup>10</sup> There are several widely available editions of Whitman's poetry including *The Works of Walt Whitman* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth) 1995.

first inversion of B $\flat$  minor for the word 'ground'. The ground is quite literally taken from under our feet.

There is irony as the stanza finishes, for the perfect cadence in D minor has not a 'proper' dominant chord preceding the final unison tonic but an augmented chord on the dominant: ambivalence in several ways. If we think ahead to the eventual settling onto F as the key of the entire work then here we have a tonic chord in which the dominant is raised. Thus the way is obscured, or, as the poem puts it, there is no path to follow. This chord is also a first inversion if we regard it in this way, a further unsettling feature.

If we think of the chord as a pile of major thirds built on A then it should be notated as A, C $\sharp$  and E $\sharp$ . Vaughan Williams uses the enharmonic F which makes the alto part much easier to read and pitch, but here again is a subtle expression of the absence of a path.

Finally, the setting of the stanza begins on a unison A and ends on a unison D. These notes are at the furthest extremes of tonality for, as we move up or down a scale from one note to its octave, we pass where the interval has been widening from the point of departure and begin to progressively narrow the interval still to be traversed. So we walk out towards the unknown, pathless places.

### **Beyond the detail**

These notes are written by way of example to show you how you might set about study of a choral work. There is little point in putting a complete piece of work on the website. Hopefully by now you will have begun to understand something of what is needed to get inside a piece of choral music.

So what else might be needed in your preparation for the exam?

We'll assume you now know the work thoroughly, so that if you were listening to it and the performance stopped unexpectedly you would know in your mind exactly what should come next – rather as, if you were playing a piece you have studied thoroughly and as you were playing it the copy were to fall off the stand, you would be able to continue for at least a while. What now?

Ask yourself what seem to be the most important and most interesting things about the music. These are likely to be what the examiners will choose to ask you about. In *Towards the Unknown Region* I would include the whole issue of tonality, how Vaughan Williams establishes a sense of key, what steps he takes to disguise his final intentions and also how he gives hints of what those intentions might be. I would consider the balance between the settings of the first four stanzas and the final one. I would also consider his uses of unison singing and of contrapuntal textures.

This would lead me to formulate questions such as these:

'How does Vaughan Williams achieve a sense of overall balance in *Towards the Unknown Region*?'

'Choose three examples of effective use of counterpoint in *Towards the Unknown Region* and discuss how V W creates his effects.'

'Is *Towards the Unknown Region* a strophic setting in disguise?'

In 2009 the question will include both an essay and some short answer questions. Here are some examples of the latter followed by ideas for answers.

**Using the music from bar 25, answer the following questions:**

**1. Suggest three ways in which, between bars 25 and 30, the music expresses the traveller's lack of material help.**

Here are four possible answers: the direction *misteriosa*; the *pp* dynamic and *diminuendo* in bar 29; the rests between each small group of words; the 'spooky' feel of the bass part.

**2. Compare the bass in bars 30 and 31 with the alto in bars 31 and 32.**

They begin with the same pitches; also the alto is in diminution.

**3. Explain the chord at the beginning of bar 51.**

For the choir it is written as a first inversion of C flat major but the orchestra uses enharmonic equivalent notes and the chord is a second inversion.

To score a high mark when answering essay questions it is necessary to have a point of view and argue it with close reference to musical detail in the work. Some questions may be more effectively answered if you make passing reference to other music as well as the prescribed work.

Every paragraph you write must say something about the issue raised in the question. If it does not do this it is irrelevant and will lead to loss of marks. The most common reason for failure in essay questions on prescribed works is irrelevance.

## **Coda**

I hope you have enjoyed studying one or both of these two works and found the comments helpful. I have tried not to be exhaustive in what I've said, but to point you in the sort of direction you should be going when you undertake study at the sort of level expected in the first year of university or conservatoire. By this time you should be able to think for yourself and use your skills of analysis to form cogent arguments for or against ideas proposed for discussion in the questions on the examination paper. You need to know the music thoroughly so the score becomes an *aide-memoire*. You need to know extensive stretches of the music from memory. You also need plenty of practice at devising answers to the sorts of questions that appear in exam papers at this level. Remember that the examiners are not trying to catch you out. On the contrary, we hope you will have found great pleasure from your studies and that by carefully arguing your case you can share something of this pleasure with others.

WV Tomkins