

# Two neglected works played

VAUGHAN Williams, Warlock, and Delius were the shadows behind the concert given at the Civic Hall, Guildford, by Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus under their conductor, Vernon Hadley. It was fitting that V.W.'s uncompromising *Fourth Symphony* should be preceded by works by two neglected composers who, like V.W., owed much to folksong.

Patrick Hadley's *The Trees so High*, after a successful premiere in 1931, had virtually fallen into oblivion. Its neglect is simply another result of the unambitious attitude of the average concertgoer, for it is a well-written, effective work, tightly unified by the beautiful West Country folksong which was the source of its inspiration and its title.

After three purely orchestral movements, the bass soloist and chorus relate the tragic story of the young bride whose fiance is sent away by her father to be educated; he dies during his absence leaving her with his child.

## Word-painting

I tell the story because many of the verses were omitted from the programme and the chorus's diction was not such that the words came across clearly. The setting has some brilliant word-painting, depicting the shriek of the "wind on the thatch" and the knell for the dead man. These, and the mood of the piece, were carefully pointed by the soloist John Barrow and the orchestra, while the chorus provided a sweeping warmth of tone.

The atmosphere of the ballad pervades the three orchestral movements, particularly the first,

punctuated by a timpani call which turns out to be part of the folk tune.

## Skilful orchestrator

Hadley was a skilful orchestrator, and this point was driven home by the G.P.O.'s performance; most telling were the interplaying melodies on solo woodwind in the second movement, and the chilling tornado at the outset of the third. We must look forward to the recording by the G.P.O. chorus and the New Philharmonia.

E. J. Moeran's *Violin Concerto*, written during the Second World War, contains much hauntingly beautiful music, but lacks momentum, and is too long for what it has to say. Bernard Partridge's rendering was appropriately rhapsodic and restrained; he spelt moderation and introspection both in tempo and dynamic, as though the meditative finale was being foreshadowed in the rest of the work. One felt that the orchestra might have favoured a more robust interpretation.

## Mankind's predicament

In his *Fourth Symphony* Vaughan Williams takes one long hard look at the predicament of mankind and then strides off stage as angrily as he arrived. Ironic jollity, stark counterpoint, savage dissonances were piled upon each other by the orchestra. Frightening, indeed, were the crashing opening bars, the searing chromatic themes ever recurring; awesome were the pianissimo string chords; provocative of much to come were the flute cadenzas, perfectly executed, in the second movement. This was an inspired performance. - Sheila Godwin.