

Summary. Main thesis. Conclusions

In my dissertation, I discuss two pieces by an English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams – a song cycle and a piano quintet, representing two genres of piano chamber music. This is an integral part of the CD recording. In the written description I analyze the pieces, taking into account especially the wide spectrum of piano issues.

The dissertation is entitled: „The function of the piano within genres of chamber music by Ralph Vaughan Williams through the example of the song cycle *Songs of Travel* and the *Piano Quintet in c-minor*. The performer’s perspective”.

I consider many aspects of this topic. By the term ‘the piano’, I understand both the piano part written by the composer as well as the interpretation created by the pianist. Therefore, in the process of analyzing, I’m talking about means of expression given by the composer as well as the pianistic tasks evoked by them.

I find the pieces which I analyze very special. They are both composed by the English great composer, Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) and they are a part of his early output, having been composed in 1903 and 1904.

Ralph Vaughan Williams is considered to be a giant of the 20th century English music and a symbol of British national identity. He is an author of nine symphonies, many of significant orchestral and choral pieces and also chamber music. The most popular pieces are *Fantasia on Thomas Tallis*, *The Lark Ascending*, *Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus* and *Fantasia on Greensleeves*. However, he is not properly known and appreciated in Poland yet. His pieces are performed in our concert halls relatively rarely. Since I found out about the man and his work, I have become more and more fascinated. I started to wonder what is the phenomenon of this music, which is very specific and can be unmistakably recognized as English.

The first chapter is an outline of Vaughan Williams biography and his output. I mark out and describe different periods of his life, but what interests me the most is his musical apprenticeship – the early period of his artistic work, years of studies, people around him and all inspirations which make him a composer. In this biographical research, I use sources such as Vaughan Williams’s autobiographical essay, the biography written by his second wife Ursula Vaughan Williams and the monography by a musicologist Michael Kennedy.

In the second chapter, I examine the *Songs of Travel* cycle. In the beginning, I discuss the context, starting with the ideas of the 20th century English Musical Renaissance and English Song Revival. I also regard some key inspirations for writing this proper song cycle, like the trope of wandering, the idea of the Open Road and also some of the composer's personal features, like a fondness for literature rooted in his childhood or fondness for English countryside. I also include a short biography of Robert Louis Stevenson, the author of the texts. I consider the cycle as a music story and compare it to the most well-known cycle about travelling – *Die Winterreise* by Franz Schubert. Next, I move on to present the history of writing and publishing the songs within the song cycle. The main part of this chapter is a detailed analysis of each of the nine songs. I follow the progress of each piece, regarding especially the connection between the text and music. In particular, I focus on the means of piano expression used to illustrate the text and to create the relative character of the music. I point out that the vocal part and the piano part correspond with each other very closely. I imagine that the vocal part represents the Wanderer himself and the piano part is the whole reality and space which surrounds him – the road, the air, the sky. Nature corresponds with the wanderer in the story as well as the piano part replies to the vocal line. Meanwhile, I notice some special features, which can be described as composer's fingerprints (like frequent use of a specific rhythmic formula, containing a triplet group, using modality, niente endings). I conclude, that Vaughan Williams pays a lot of attention to illustrate the text with musical means and most of these means can be actually found in the piano part. One can find various melodic and rhythmic motives connected with the character of each song, like the motive of a marching step. I end this chapter with the summary. I claim, that the way of treating the piano part is a continuation of the tradition established by Schubert and Schumann: The piano part is considered an equivalent partner to vocal in creating the character.

In the third chapter, I discuss the *Piano Quintet in c-minor*. Consequently, I give some context in the beginning. I recall the composer's activity as a chamber musician during his years of study, then I point out and talk about a special feature of the *Piano Quintet*, which is scoring for ensemble with double bass instead of second violin (what immediately reminds about the *Piano Quintet* by Franz Schubert). The context is supplemented by a few paragraphs about other early output, other chamber pieces and the most significant piano works by Vaughan Williams. The main part of this chapter contains a detailed analysis of each of the three movements. I examine the structure and

follow the progress of main musical themes and their exchange between all the instruments. I explore the way, in which various elements of a musical piece affect the character and build the dramaturgy. I focus especially on the piano part and means of expression. Sometimes, based on my own experience, I suggest a solution, which can be applied to solve some performing problems. This chapter also ends with the summary.

The fourth chapter consists of several subsections. It contains summary, conclusions and some thoughts on performing problems, regarding especially the issue of chamber music performance. In the beginning, I compare the pieces analysed in the previous chapters, pointing out some common features of music style, structure and substance. Next, I recall the terminology used to talk about different aspects of the function of the piano in the musical piece. Then I discuss the issue of the pianist work within different kind of chamber ensembles and claim that the difference between performing various music genres is not, in fact, really significant because all the performers should always follow and respect the general rules of a musical partnership regardless of the music genre. This idea is inspired by a great polish authority, pianist and chamber musician, Professor Jerzy Marchwiński. However, there are some performing aspects, which I dedicate separately to the ensemble with a singer and with a string quartet. In the last paragraph, I consider an impact and benefits, which can be gained by cooperating with other musicians, in particular with singers.

Main thesis and conclusions:

- the piano part plays a very significant role in both described pieces. In spite of a quite different scoring – the vocal piece on the one hand and the instrumental piece on the other, the general tasks for musicians are the same and very universal. Generally speaking, performers should always follow the rules of *musical partnership*. I use this term in a way which Professor Jerzy Marchwiński describes in his impressive book *Partnership in music*;
- the piano part participates very efficiently in creating the musical character and building dramaturgy, both in the song cycle and in the piano quintet. In the vocal piece, in addition, it is inseparably connected with the poetical text;
- the pianist should cooperate with other partners, taking into account the whole score, listen to his own part as well as the others, be active in creating, share energy and inspiration with others being at the same time very careful to play *in the context*. These

tasks apply of course to all musicians, but it's the pianist that I focus on very specifically in my dissertation;

- both pieces are written in a late romantic style, but have hints of an English tradition, church music and folk songs as well; in addition, we can find there some specific features of composer's style, called '*fingerprints*': niente ending and rhythmic formulas, containing a group of triplet;

- the piano part is equivalent to other parts

Other main aims:

- presenting the output of Ralph Vaughan Williams, proving that his early works already contain some specific features of the later works, mature style and that this style is significantly marked by the English idiom;

- proving that both considered pieces – *Songs of Travel* and *Piano Quintet in c-minor* are valuable examples of music literature, representing various genres of piano chamber music and as such – are worth to be widely disseminated to the audience;

- exploring how the pianist can enrich his art by cooperating with other musicians, in particular, how playing with a singer can affect one's phrasing or how playing the music with poetical text can affect one's imagination or finally – how playing with the whole string ensemble in the piano quintet can improve one's sound imagination