

## **English Folk Song Suite**, Ralph Vaughn Williams, Boosey & Hawkes (HL)

Miles, Richard, *Teaching Music through Performance in Band*, Vol. 1, pp. 467-479, Grechesky, Robert. GIA Publications. 2010.

Recording:

Live in Concert, "The President's Own" United State Marine Band. Col. Timothy W. Foley, Conducting.

English Folk Song Suite occupies a very respected place in the Wind Band library. Vaughn Williams was a well-known composer when this was written in 1923. So, it is one of the first compositions for band by such a prominent composer. Only the Holst Suites are held in the same regard. Nine folk songs are used in the three movements. The above reference in *Teaching Music Through Performance* is an excellent analysis of this suite. I cannot improve on what Robert Grechesky has already stated. It continues to be my study guide.

Mvt. 1. March, "Seventeen Come Sunday" both Grainger and Holst also used this folk song. British march in character so the tempo should be less than the standard American march. I default to someplace around MM=116.

The challenge is the light articulation. Keep it light and let the texture guide the dynamics. For instance, let the full ensemble make the fortissimo at meas. 18. No need for the band to push too much. Full and controlled is the goal.

The lyrical section "Pretty Caroline" requires a cantabile approach. I have done this with just trumpet solo or clarinet solo and together so interpret in a way that captures the character as you hear it.

Meas. 65, sorry as a trombone player I have to play fortissimo! I have the melody!! I will play it marcato as indicated and the audience will be on their feet! It is the best part of the movement!! The 6/8 countermelody in WW must be played crisply and cleanly. Detached but remain light and playful.

Mvt. 2, Intermezzo – "My Bonny Boy." A sad love song in F minor. Melodic shape and expressive playing is the goal. Find the words to help understand phrasing. Help soloist understand the musical meaning and direction of the notes within the phrase where to place the stress and where is the top of the phrases.

I like this played by oboe, so it has that melancholy sound.

I add a tuba F natural in meas. 4&5 to darken the chord.

Add dynamic shape of lines. This is a 7 bar phrase.

Exaggerate the dynamics in meas. 14-15 & 16-17.

Second statement of melody in meas. 22 I balance to the euphonium timbre.

The Countermelody is so interesting in fl,ob,solo cl. It needs to shadow the melody but not disappear.

The first of only two forte dynamics occurs in meas. 38.

I do not conduct the clarinet solo. I ask them to treat as a cadenza. Encourage them to take their time. Ritard to the end of the line.

Meas. 43, Scherzando "Green Bushes" is tune. Conduct in 1. Achieve contrast in character to Bonny Boy. Playful and fun is goal.

Triangle adds the much-needed sparkle. Audience must see it to hear it!  
Meas. 58, Clarinet and flute arpeggios are introduction to restatement of Green Bushes in euph,ct1,as.

Trombone quarter note chords should be long. Add a tenuto line over each note.

I start the ritard in meas. 74 and gradually slow to the original tempos by 78.

This low reed tuba, euph melody is what I like to think as a call and response with the cornet and clarinet. Very legato. Work out the breathing for euph and tuba.

I add a breath mark for everyone three bars from the end. Complete pause and rearticulate the F major chord in meas. 96.

Mvt. 3. Contrasting texture and styles defines this movement.

Begins with a light, graceful intro.

Cornet solo is light yet stately.

Tutti ensemble beginning in meas. 20 is very march like and aggressive.

Meas. 29, yay! Trombones/euphonium have the melody again. It will be played with authority that only the trombone/euphonium can do!

Trio, meas. 71, is light and playful to start.

Meas. 89 the character is majestic and bold. So, guess who gets the melody? That is correct **LOW BRASS!** Low reeds need to put their sound inside the low brass. Space is needed on the quarters.

Be careful that counter line in WW and high brass is in time and not rushed.

On the DC I add a ritard beginning in meas. 65 to the Fine. The last eighth note in meas. 68 should be played long. I add a tenuto to the accent. I have students say "TAAW!" for length.

Once again, the analysis in the Teaching Music is terrific. I strongly encourage you to reference it as part of your study.