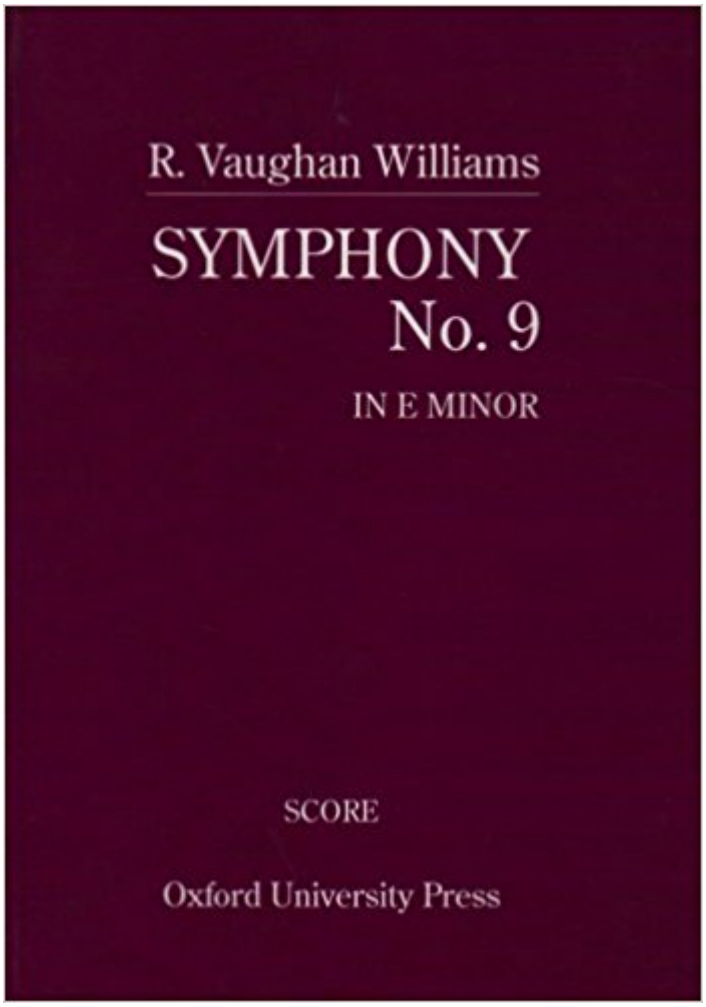
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Symphony No. 9: Study Score



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Synopsis

The Symphony No. 9 in E minor, the last symphony by Vaughan Williams, was completed in 1957 and first performed by the Royal Philharmonic conducted by Malcolm Sargent on 2 April 1958, in the composer's eighty-sixth year. Vaughan Williams's original idea was to create a programmatic symphony based on Tess of the d'Urbervilles, even though the programmatic elements eventually disappeared. Existing sketches clearly indicate that in the early stages of composition certain passages related to specific people and events in the novel: in some manuscripts the first movement is headed Wessex Prelude and the heading Tess appears above sketches for the second movement. The work is in four movements: Moderato Maestoso; Andante sostenuto; Scherzo: Allegro pesante; Finale: Andante tranquillo. It is worth noting that the opening theme of the slow movement comes from music composed more than fifty years earlier: A Sea Symphony and an even earlier, unpublished tone poem from 1904 called The Solent. The composer himself called the drumbeat that immediately follows Ã¢â ¬Å“the ghostly drummer of Salisbury Plain.Ã¢â ¬Â• In the composerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s note accompanying the premiere he writes: Ã¢â ¬Å“The usual symphony orchestra is used with the addition of three saxophones and flugelhorn. This beautiful and neglected instrument is not usually allowed in the refined circles of the orchestra and has been banished to the brass band, where it is allowed to indulge in the art of vibrato, while in the orchestra it is obliged to play with a pure and unwavering tone. The saxophones, also, are not expected, except possibly in one place in the scherzo, to behave like demented cats, but are allowed to be their own romantic selves. Otherwise the orchestra is normal and is, the composer hopes, sound in wind and strings.Ã¢â ¬Â• Very early in the first movement the saxophones play a chorale-like passage, perhaps to emphasize that this will not be the sort of dance band music which appears in the Sixth Symphony.

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Customer Reviews

In the fifty years since his death, Vaughan Williams has come to be regarded as one of the finest British composers of the 20th century. He has a particularly wide-ranging catalogue of works, including choral works, symphonies, concerti, and opera. His searching and visionary imagination, combined with a flexibility in writing for all levels of music-making, has meant that his music is as popular today as it ever has been.

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