HALLÉ
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
THE WASPS
SIR MARK ELDER
HENRY GOODMAN

HALLÉ
MUSIC DIRECTOR SIR MARK ELDER CBE
HENRY GOODMAN NARRATOR
RICHARD SUART CHORUS LEADER
CHORUS
CHORAL DIRECTOR JAMES BURTON

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ASSISTANT ENGINEER WILL BROWN
PRODUCER (VOICE OF PROCLEON) CHRIS WINES, BBC MANCHESTER

RECORDED 26–28 JULY 2005
IN THE ALBERT HALLS, BOLTON

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Vaughan Williams' 'The Wasps' is published by Faber Music Ltd, London. The full score is based on the edition prepared by Igor Kennaway from the composer's manuscript.

Special thanks to Martin Kingsbury and Elaine Gould.

CD HLD 7510

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RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)
THE WASPS

Text by Aristophanes
English singing translation and narration by David Pountney

CD 1 ACT I

1.	*No.1 Overture*	9.36
2.	*Procleon: 'Bastard! Bloody lickspittle!'*	4.00
3.	*No.2 Introduction (Nocturne)*	1.20
4.	*No.3 Melodrama and Chorus*	6.15
5.	*No.4 Chorus: The Wasps' Serenade*	5.55
6.	*Procleon: 'Boys, your song brings tears to my eyes ...'*	1.03
7.	*No.5 Chorus ('When we buzz ...')*	0.44
8.	*Procleon: 'Then all hell breaks loose'*	0.32
9.	*No.6 Chorus ('If you survive your sixtieth year ...')*	1.36
10.	*Procleon: 'Imagine how it feels ...'*	1.52
11.	*No.7 Melodrama and Chorus*	2.29
12.	*Procleon: 'So Sandra starts in ...'*	2.45
13.	*No.8 Melodrama and Chorus*	5.50
TOTAL TIMING		44.07

CD 2 ACT II

1.	*No.9 Entr'acte and Introduction*	2.45
2.	*Procleon: 'Well, I was in the depths of depression ...'*	1.14
3.	*No.10 Melodrama and Chorus*	6.54
4.	*Padre: 'Let the jury be seated'*	1.15
5.	*No.11 March Past of the Witnesses*	1.32
6.	*Procleon: 'So, Wok, what's the evidence?'*	2.03
7.	*No.12 Chorus: Parabasis*	21.02
	ACT III	
8.	*No.13 Entr'acte*	4.24
9.	*Procleon: 'So, how do you like my new outfit?'*	1.00
10.	*No.14 Chorus ('His army cloak, his field canteen ...')*	4.30
11.	*No.15 Melodrama ('Out of my way ...')*	0.37
12.	*Procleon: 'Great wine they had at that dinner!'*	2.03
13.	*No.16 Melodrama ('Ta-ratata-ta ...')*	1.20
14.	*No.17 Melodrama ('I must be dreaming!')*	1.50
15.	*No.18 Chorus and Dance*	8.28
TOTAL TIMING		61.30

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
THE WASPS

Apart from a broadcast in 1972, the complete score of the music Ralph Vaughan Williams composed for a production of Aristophanes' satirical comedy *The Wasps* at Cambridge University in 1909 had not been heard until this recording was made in 2005. Of course the Overture is a popular opener to concerts and many listeners will know the five-movement suite which the composer extracted from the score in 1912. But the rest, containing witty and beautiful music, has lain forgotten. It was Vaughan Williams's first big score for the theatre, the prelude to the five operas he was to write over the next fifty years.

The triennial performance of a Greek play in the original language with specially commissioned incidental music began in Oxford in 1880 and the idea was borrowed by Cambridge two years later. When the Cambridge Greek Play Committee met on 4 December 1908 it decided to invite Vaughan Williams, who had been an undergraduate at Trinity in the 1890s, to provide the music for *The Wasps* the following November. This was a bold choice. At that date he had no major works to his credit apart from a Leeds Festival success in 1907 with the short choral ode *Toward the Unknown Region*. He was known mainly as the composer of some solo songs, the song-cycles *Songs of Travel* and *The House of Life*, the *Norfolk Rhapsodies* and as music editor of the recently published *English Hymnal*. In January 1908 he had gone for three months of intensive study in Paris with Maurice Ravel and this was to have an incalculable effect on his development. Within two years he composed *On Wenlock Edge*, the *Tallis Fantasia*, a string quartet — and *The Wasps*. He also revised and completed the big choral work on which he had been working since 1903, *A Sea Symphony*.

No doubt his candidature was supported by Hubert Parry, Charles Villiers Stanford and Charles Wood, all of whom had written Greek Play scores for Cambridge and also had taught Vaughan Williams at one time or another. He worked fast and enabled Cambridge to engrave and print the vocal score by the middle of the summer of 1909. Orchestration occupied him from 16 September to 12 November. The first of six performances was given in the New Theatre on 26 November with Charles Wood conducting an orchestra of 24 players. Among the undergraduates in the cast were Steuart Wilson, later to be a leading tenor soloist and eventually to hold high posts at the BBC and the Royal Opera House, Denis Browne, the composer (and friend of Rupert Brooke) who was killed in the First World War in 1915, and Miles Malleson, who became a leading character actor on stage and in films. The music, much of which must have sounded distinctly 'modern' at the time, caused quite a stir and received many favourable reviews (from Edward J. Dent among others).

When Vaughan Williams prepared the Suite in 1912 he enlarged the orchestration to include double woodwind, four horns and two trumpets, and made extensive revisions. The 'March Past of the Witnesses' (as it is in the play) became 'March Past of the Kitchen Utensils', differing from the original not only in orchestration but in the interpolation of a central section derived from a chorus at the end of Act 2. It was in this item in 1909 that a member of the percussion section was instructed to 'shake a bag full of broken china'. Would it be Wedgwood, Vaughan Williams was asked by someone who knew that his mother was a Wedgwood. 'Of course', he replied, 'it's the only china that would make the right sound!'

Among delights awaiting listeners to this recording, apart from the pleasure of hearing the great central tune of the Overture in a choral version, are Vaughan Williams's quotations from other composers' works, something which was not usually in his line but which he realised suited the light-hearted nature of *The Wasps*. In the dances in No.17, for example, you will hear a snatch of Mendelssohn's *Spring Song* (*Frühlingslied*, Op. 62, No.6), a reference to an aria from Offenbach's *Le Roi carotte* (1872) and to the *Merry Widow* waltz (London premiere in 1907). In No.15 Vaughan Williams quotes from the music Parry wrote for the Greek Play in 1883 (Aristophanes' *The Birds*). He converts Parry's theme into a pentatonic march and puts a footnote in the score 'With apologies to a great English composer'. The introductory theme of No.16 is founded on a Cambridgeshire folk-song, *The lady looked out*, collected by Vaughan Williams in June 1908. It is the only direct folk-song quotation in the score, but there are many modal passages which derive from folk-song and serve to link Edwardian England to the modes of ancient Greece.

By far the most ambitious section of the score is No.12, the *Parabasis*, a long stretch of music in which we hear anticipations of the Vaughan Williams of the *Serenade to Music* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. At the words 'something new to take you by surprise' there is a quotation from Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, by no means as familiar in 1909 as it is today. (A Parabasis, by the way, in ancient Greek comedy was a part sung by the chorus, addressed to the audience in the poet's name and unconnected with the action of the play.) If another of the sturdy choral melodies may seem familiar it is because Vaughan Williams commandeered it as the hymn-tune Marathon ('Servants of the great adventure') for the 1931 enlarged edition of *Songs of Praise*. Much use is made throughout of melodrama (speech accompanied by music).

The impetus to resuscitate this exciting and significant work came from the composer's widow Ursula, who commissioned the conductor Igor Kennaway to prepare an edition of the full score from the autograph manuscript. This and the vocal score published in Cambridge in 1909 form the basis of the present Faber Music performing edition. The 1909 translation in the vocal score is heavily bowdlerised and would be impossible to use today. Aristophanes wrote a biting satire on the Athenian jury system full of knock-about and bawdy humour (he would have enjoyed Billy Connolly). David Pountney has written a new text which takes account of the stronger stomachs of present-day audiences. As he says: 'Aristophanes wrote his comedies for particular occasions and they are full of references to contemporary Athenian politics and familiar personalities of the day. I have avoided including in the text such present-day references as they would soon become as outdated and incomprehensible as the original. However, in any public performance of this version it would be entirely appropriate to embellish the text with present-day references and indeed rather lame not to!'

Aristophanes customarily used three characters in his comedies: the protagonist, antagonist and chorus. Sometimes the chorus took part in the action and commented on it. In Pountney's version, a single narrator portrays both protagonist and antagonist. The former, Procleon, is an old soldier with bigoted views, a sort of Alf Garnett from the television sitcom *Till Death Us Do Part*. His son Anticleon, mockingly called Sandra by his father, is the antagonist, an unprincipled youth on the make and much concerned with appearances. And if at the end of Act 3 you are puzzled by the advent of dancing crabs, they stem from the Athenian politician Karkinos (which means crab) whose three sons lead the dance and may in fact have done so at the play's first performance in about 410 B.C. I won't attempt to précis the plot. Procleon will be your guide, in colourful language, and Vaughan Williams's enticing music will do the rest.

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THE WASPS

Jurassic Park begins with the premise that from an insect preserved in amber, the DNA of an entire era can deduced, and even re-created. Work on *The Wasps* is much like that, though with rather less dramatic consequences. It is a wonderfully fossilised object giving us an insight into the aesthetics of vanished ages: the traditions of Aristophanes' comedy — a complete formal structure containing a mixture of references now totally obscure with others still astonishingly topical; the era of pre-First World War Cambridge, secure and complacent in its bell-jar; the era of 19th-century Greek scholarship — reverent and decorous; a particular era of 'English music' — folk-song with a dash of French mustard.

'Cambridge' aesthetics of the time must have had a severe problem with Aristophanes, who was closer in spirit to a Music Hall than to a Cambridge college. His comedy was brazenly public, bawdy, and politically contentious: a kind of *That Was the Week That Was* designed for performance at something resembling the Munich Oktoberfest — an open-air Volksfest, raucous and healthily lubricated. The combination of the Cambridge aesthetics of the time with a highly reverent perception of Greek culture here yields something delicately deferential, supremely genteel, and witty in a fey and whimsical tradition that is, perhaps sadly, as extinct in current theatrical life as the dinosaurs. I know the feeling: as a student at Cambridge in the '60s I naturally plunged into the kitchen-sink grunge that passed for theatre in that era, and which now seems just as delightfully laughable.

A certain balance therefore has to be held in making a version that will be viable and, hopefully, entertaining — within bounds of course. A completely Aristophelian version would have left us all wondering why it was not composed by Frank Zappa. The existing English translation — an astonishing period piece in its way — would only have offered unintentional amusement obscuring the genuine quality and originality of Vaughan Williams's music. I have therefore attempted, in the sung translation, to match some of the humour of Aristophanes by indulging in my delight in Cole Porterish rhyme — a light cabaret style that hopefully stays within the disciplinary and stylistic limits of the music.

For the narration I drew on the tradition of stand-up comedy, and the long line of 'old codgers' that have enriched radio and television over the last fifty years. It is salutary that Aristophanes' main character, Procleon, is in his curmudgeonly and bigoted way still absolutely up to date: a cross-party hybrid of Norman Tebbit and John Prescott? His son, the plausible young man of fashion, hints at many of the less attractive aspects of Blair's 'New Labour' cronies. Combining the protagonist and antagonist, plus the bit parts traditionally played by the third actor in one narrator presents an amusing challenge for a character actor, but is not alien to the process of Greek Theatre: the chorus after all speaks for both sides, and the author as well. (Greek comedy, like the modern West End, was economical with actors, especially as they, unlike the chorus, were paid by the State!)

And as the only singing role, it is the chorus, and especially their traditional show piece, the Parabasis, that is the most original and interesting aspect of *The Wasps*. The Parabasis was the central part of an Aristophanes comedy — the chance for him to shine directly as author after all the slapstick of the agon (the conflict) was over — and it had a clear rhythmic structure developed over seven different sections: a prelude, an address to the audience, a fast moving patter song — not really represented here — a strophe, an epirrhema, an antistrophe (reflecting the rhythm of the strophe) and an antepirrhema, mirroring the epirrhema. *The Wasps* contained a particularly complete form, and the result is a 15-minute dramatic scena for chorus — something for which no model exists in operatic literature, and which presents Vaughan Williams with his greatest challenge. He responds rather as a colourist than a dramatic, let alone a show-biz composer, but it is a tour-de-force of atmospheric and mood variation — clearly more wistful than Aristophanes had in mind, but as a reflection on a group of tired old soldiers — more fit for reminiscence than action — not inappropriate.

A Parabasis is a digression (literally a step aside) in which the author directly addresses the audience, as Aristophanes indeed does in this case, first flattering them and then very amusingly asking them to store up his new and original ideas along with their socks and shoes so that their wardrobe may be 'suffused with the odours of oratory'. But he then allows the chorus to become highly dramatic in their re-enactment of the heroic past of the Wasps complete with battle scenes and manoeuvres — giving a chance for the choric choreographer (the chorodidaskalos) to display his talents. Incidentally, as a footnote to modern operatic necessity, it is interesting to note that in the Greek Theatre the 'Sponsor' (choregus) was the wealthy businessman or patron who was appointed (N.B. — no argument!) by the Archon (magistrate) to pay for the chorus. In the case of T*he Wasps* Aristophanes must have had a generous patron as he chose to write an exceptionally detailed and varied Parabasis that required considerable rehearsal. Vaughan Williams has followed suit in style.

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SIR MARK ELDER CBE CONDUCTOR

Mark Elder became Music Director of the Hallé in September 2000. Frequently invited to work with many of the world's leading symphony orchestras and opera companies, he was awarded the CBE by the Queen in 1989 and won an Olivier Award for his outstanding work at English National Opera where he was Music Director between 1979 and 1993. He was Principal Guest Conductor of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra from 1992 to 1995, and Music Director of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra in the USA from 1989 to 1994. He has also been Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the London Mozart Players.

HENRY GOODMAN NARRATOR

Henry Goodman is the recipient of Olivier Awards for his performances as Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* and Charles Guiteau in *Assassins*. He has also received Variety Artists Best Actor Awards for Billy Flynn in *Chicago* and Nathan Detroit in *Guys and Dolls*. He made his Broadway debut in 1998 as Serge in *Art*. Other theatre credits include the title roles in *Tartuffe*, *Henry VIII*, *Pericles* and *Richard III*, and lead roles in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *After the Fall*, *Volpone*, as well as many others. His film credits include *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers*, *Churchill*, *The Final Curtain*, *The Labyrinth*, *Notting Hill*, *Queen of Hearts*, *Son of the Pink Panther*, *The Saint* and *Private Parts*. He has extensive television credits, including *The Merchant of Venice*, *Foyle's War*, *Measure for Measure*, *Lovejoy*, *The Arabian Nights*, *After the War*, *Dirty Tricks*, *Murder Rooms*, and *99-1*.

RICHARD SUART CHORUS LEADER/PADRE

Richard Suart began his operatic career with the English Music Theatre Company and Opera Factory and is now much sought after, particularly in music theatre, contemporary opera and as a comedian in the more standard repertoire. He also presents a highly successful one-man show titled *As a Matter of Patter*, an evening of predominantly Gilbert and Sullivan songs, dialogue and anecdotes, which he has performed with his wife throughout the UK, in Ireland, the Middle East and South Africa.

HALLÉ & **HALLÉ CHOIR**

The Hallé, Britain's longest-established professional symphony orchestra, was founded in Manchester — together with the Hallé Choir — by the pianist and conductor Charles Hallé, and gave its first concert in Manchester's Free Trade Hall in 1858.

The Hallé remains one of Britain's best-regarded ensembles and has, since 1996, performed in its new Manchester home, The Bridgewater Hall, where it presents around eighty concerts a year, as well as giving over fifty more around the country and across the world. You can get more information about the Hallé by visiting its website at www.halle.co.uk

HALLÉ

MUSIC DIRECTOR SIR MARK ELDER CBE

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RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
THE WASPS
English singing translation and narration by David Pountney

Spoken words marked in light type • Sung words marked in thin type • *Stage directions marked in italic type*

CD 1 Track 1 **No.1 Overture**

ACT I

(Street in Athens in front of Procleon's house. Night. Procleon is revealed inside the house, strapped into a chair.)

2

Procleon: Bastard! Bloody lickspittle! Pompous puritanical moralizing pseud! *(struggling with bindings)* Tying me up indeed! No bloody Persian ever took me prisoner in twenty years of war, and now I'm a prisoner of my own son! We named him Alexander — it's a good military name, that. But now I call him Sandra. *(changing his voice, as Anticleon)* Sandra's a very ... fashionable boy — fancy clothes, fancy speeches, fancy houses. He spins around a lot with the 'in' crowd, the cronies. *(as himself)* And Sandra does not like what I do or who I am! You see, I'm an Old Soldier! I was brought up in hard times — hard times, hard labour, rationing and all that. And I still untie and save every bit of string I get. And I still fry up every bit of grub I don't scoff straight away, which ain't much.

And the great pleasure in my life is when me and my old mates get together and present ourselves before the courts to be selected as the jury. Off we go at about three in the morning to be at the front of the queue. And if I'm not selected, do they know it at home! I'm in a right stinking mood, thrash the slaves and kick the dog and generally make myself obnoxious. But if I do get selected, well then I'm in heaven, and me and my old mates, with not a penny to split between us, we sit there and make mincemeat out of that bunch of cheating, lying dross of politicians, corporate executives, PR consultants, bankers and one sort of sponger after another that comes up before us. The Wasps they call us, because we know how to sting where it hurts. And we gets paid for it! Not much, of course, but enough to get some nosh after. And we love it! It gives us a bit of power, a bit of cash and most of all a bit of goddamned respect which is pretty thin on the ground these days, especially if you're a day over 35! But don't think for one minute I go there just for fun. Oh dearie me, no. I go to convict people — because, let's face it, we know they're guilty, don't we? And having convicted them I send 'em down for bloody ever.

You'd think your family would be proud of a man who knows what his duty is, wouldn't you? But *(as Anticleon)* Sandra hates it. Says I shouldn't mix with that shabby rabble of old crocks. He says I'm bringing down the family name and he has a reputation to keep up. *(as himself)* Reputation! *(yawning)* Reputation for what, I'd like to know! Anyway, he's gone off to a 'dinner party' and tied me up because he knows the BOCs (that's the Band of Old Campaigners to you) will be coming by to pick me up before he's even got past his lemon grass sorbet. And *(yawning)* bloody boring it is too. I'll have to think of an escape plan before the dawn breaks. *(He dozes off.)*

3 **No.2 Introduction (Nocturne)**

(Procleon stirs in his sleep. On the final chord he wakes with a start. It's early morning, still dark.)

4 **No.3 Melodrama and Chorus**

Procleon *(over music)*: Did I hear voices? Footsteps? Little marching feet? The rustle of wings? Stings gleaming in the moonlight? That faint hum? Imperceptible buzz?... The Wasps! But who's over there? He's posted sentries! Slaves armed with stones! Watch out, lads, it's an ambush! There's a lamp, wobbling like crazy. That lazy little boy never holds it straight, and then you step in a puddle. Bloody awful state of these roads!

(Chorus marches in, led by Chorus Leader.)

Chorus Leader:
Pick up your feet, your shoulders back,
Your chest well out, no flagging!
Don't let them see you're seventy-three
And just a trifle sagging.
Remember how we held the line
And marched and marched for ever?
And now we march again to sit
In judgement on the jury.
Old soldiers, are you fit and full
Of righteousness and fury?

(Two Sub-Leaders come forward.)

Sub-Leaders:
We're here, but somewhat short of breath,
A wheezing, sneezing army,

Chorus:
Dumde dumde dooda

Sub-Leaders: Somewhat depleted,
Since we had Byzantium defeated.
Yes, at Gallipoli we landed,
Defeated 'em single-handed.
And since a soldier must have bread
We burnt the town to bake it,
And since we needed a meat course too
Byzantium was our barbecue.

Chorus: Beware the sly and sleazy,
You will not get off so easy.
We're the brigade of veterans,
The scourges of corruption.
No tax evaders, off-shore traders,
PR blokes with brown envelopes.
Politicos: the jury knows
You're fiddling your expenses.
You're guilty, on your gravy train,
We don't care what your defence is.
Hurry along, you valiant jurymen,
To put them through their paces.
March on with your medals on your chest
To take your rightful places.
But light the path lest in the dark
You fall upon your faces.

Procleon *(over music)*: Bravo lads! That's the style! Keep it up! Whoops, there he goes, straight in the puddle just like I said! 'Boy,' he says, 'hold that bloody lamp up!' 'What do I get for it?' says the cheeky little bugger. 'This!' he says ... a bloody great clip on the ear! 'D'you think I can afford to pay you out of my lousy jury fee?' Now they're marching on. Pick 'em up, lads! Backs straight, chests out! Here they are, right outside the door. And they're looking up expectantly.

Chorus: But where's the terror of the courts,
Where's the old fanatic?
Where is he? Wasp, where is your sting?
Sleeping in the attic?
His place was always at the front,
Singing to sustain us.
Yes, droning in the Phrynian mode
Off he strode to goad the rich and famous.
Therefore, let us sing by the light of Uranus
A song to rouse the living dead
From their late and lazy bed.
Put in your teeth. We wait beneath,
We Band of Old Campaigners!

(Chorus divides into two groups and prepares to serenade Procleon.)

5 **No.4 Chorus: The Wasps' Serenade**

Procleon *(over music)*: What's going on? They're stringing their harps! The old sods are going to serenade me!

Chorus Tenors: Tell us why is your door a somnolent vacuum?
Tell us why do you lurk in the back room?

Chorus Basses: ... lurk in the back room?

Tenors: Could you not find any clean underwear?
Or did you slip and stub your toe, bare on the stone stair?

Basses: ... bare on the stone stair?

Tenors: Is there a hitch in your hiatus?
For a groin with inflamatus

Basses: ... with inflamatus

Tenors: May impair your apparatus!

Basses: ... apparatus!

Full Chorus: Of all of us comrades in arms,
Now grey and toothless,
He was by far the most ruthless.
He thought that every defendant
Deserved to be a pendant. *(hanging gesture)*
Mitigation? Balderdash!

Tenors: Is he mourning the case
Of the man from Thrace
Who was let off with probation?

Basses: ... was let off with probation?

Tenors: One of those slimy MPs
Right up to his neck in sleaze
Who claimed he was serving the nation.

Basses: ... claimed he was serving the nation.

Tenors: No wonder if he's bilious,
For the noose is his familious.

Basses: ... is his familious.

Tenors: Mercy always sends him delirious.

Basses: Mercy always sends him delirious!

Full Chorus: But up from your bed!
Put on the dread cloak of judicial majesty.
Rise to dispatch that
Odious corporate fat cat
For a sentence
Of repentance
In a cell for eternity.

Procleon *(over music)*: *(ecstatic)* Yes, yes, for eternity! Lock 'em all up, all those corporate conmen, and their fiddling accountants. Let 'em eat their stock options! *(Sings out of tune, trying to imitate the Serenade:)*
With what hanging conviction and prosecuting fury
Do I long to join the jury. *(He chokes with emotion.)*

6

Procleon *(after music)*: Boys, your song brings tears to my eyes, but I'm tied up in here.

Chorus Leader: Who dares restrain the voice of democracy?

Procleon: My son!

Chorus: Sandra?

Procleon: Sandra's done everything a poncey little pervert could think of to stop me from 'disgracing him with my vulgar populist antics'. I tried to get out by the chimney but they lit the fire. I tried to ooze through a drain but they widdled me out. I wanted to escape hanging onto the underside of a donkey but we haven't got a donkey. The only thing I can think of now is to gnaw my way through the bloody rope with my useless dentures, and to dangle myself out of the window.

Chorus Leader: That's fighting talk!
(Procleon struggles out of his bindings.)

Procleon: Done it!

7 **No.5 Chorus**

Procleon *(over music)*: Then stand by to repel boarders!

Chorus: We're ready!
When we buzz
It is becuzz
All ten of uzz
Are venomuzz.
What we duzz'll
Fuzz your muzzle,
Ruzzle duzzle,
Go for buzt!
With our black and yellow
Back let's hear him bellow.
Stick your little prick
Right in that treacherous fellow!
Don't let his hypocrisy
Diminish our democracy.
Tell the judge we have descried
A case of base
Insecticide.
National security
Demands that we
Eradicate this impurity.
What are we to him?
Dead wood!
What would he do if he could?
Jury service banned for good!

8

Procleon *(after music)*: Then all hell breaks loose. Sandra's there shouting orders, grabs me by the neck (have to admit he's stronger than I thought), the slaves squirting smoke and spray over the Wasps, yelling and screaming, till finally they've pinned me down. And Sandra holds up his hand in

that plausible way of his and says *(as Anticleon)* 'Gentlemen! Gentlemen! Let's talk about this.' *(as himself)* But the old boys are pretty sore.

9 **No.6 Chorus**

Chorus: If you survive your sixtieth year,
Just disappear!
You're a mistake.
You are a burden on the state.
You're just a hateful
Figure of fun,
Just a waste of money!

Procleon *(over music)*: *(as Anticleon)* But I respect *all* ages, especially the aged ages. Let my father make his case; I will reply, and you may judge.

Chorus *(to Procleon)*: Speak up for the senior citizen's cause:
Laws which endorse
The pages of sages.
Speak up for the rights of grand old bores
To dispense the wisdom of ages.

10

Procleon *(after music)*: *(as himself)* Imagine how it feels when I arrive at the court, a shabby old man in a threadbare coat with elbow patches, and there's this big Mafia guy with shoulder pads, wringing his soft plump hands, still moist from stealing public money, and saying 'Grandpa, grandpa, we can be friends.' And this is a guy who a day before would have barged me off the pavement. So I listen politely, and then have the exquisite pleasure of going into court and systematically forgetting every weaselly little lie he just told me. And now I get to see 'em peddling their fake alibis, and pleading poverty too: the extortionate costs of their private schools, ex-wives, health clinics, face lifts, hairdressers, manicurists, de-tox units and the like. Some of them do wonderful performances, song and dance acts with jokes and high-kicking corporate choreography, spinning the facts on the point of a needle. The really desperate ones drag in their kids, their ex-wives' kids, their mistress' kids, my little boy, my angelic daughter — who, of course, howl and simper in unison and on cue. And why do they provide us with all this theatre? Because these real big shots are afraid of *us*! We're that accident black spot where the pampered privileged few bump into the paupered proletariat and get bloody shafted. That's our finest hour, you know. We're not just old soldiers stringing out our stories over stale wine ...

11 **No.7 Melodrama and Chorus**

Procleon *(over music)*: ... but power-packed regiments once again patrolling the streets of Athens to rid them of hooligans, drones, spongers, fellow travellers, blackmarketeers, people with funny names, ear-rings and suspicious haircuts, treacherous unpatriotic dross of all kinds — fighting once again for the strength, purity and independence of our country. No wonder they're afraid! And that's good, that's as it bloody well should be, but *(singing)*
I'll be damned if I fear anyone!

Chorus: Who ever heard more stirring words,
Diamond darts
Piercing the hearts
Of his enraptured hearers?

Procleon: Well, did they like that! There's simpering Sandra sweating in the corner, furiously scribbling notes on his little slate. He knows he's met his match!

Chorus Every word fulfilled its task.
Hearing him I could lie back and bask
In his reflected glory.
And as he spoke
My heart broke.
I seemed to see the fields of Elysium
There before me.

Procleon: But I suppose he's not altogether my son for nothing. *(as Anticleon)* Oh, he says, you may think your speech sounded very good, but when I've had my say you can take it out to the lavvy and wipe your arse with it. *(as himself)* Arrogant little sod!

Chorus: Well, he might have to loop the loop,
Square the circle and jump through a hoop
If he wants to win his case.
We are a somewhat stubborn group:
I would not be in his place!

12

Procleon *(after music)*: So Sandra starts in with that special quiet voice of his, a soft note that cuts your throat like a silk ribbon. *(as Anticleon)* Well, it is a tough job indeed to cure a hardened addict of his slavery — for let's be quite clear, slavery it is! Slavery to the addiction — which, like any other addict, he would naturally deny — and, far worse and more subtle, slavery to those who created his addiction and feed his habit. He, of course, hails his addiction as freedom, the freedom of the small man to bring down the rich and powerful, and get paid for it into the bargain.

Let's examine the pay first. You who fought to conquer the cities whose revenues now fill the Treasury, what proportion of those revenues do you receive for your work on the juries? 10%? No! 10% of 10%? Not even! If your work is so important for our democracy, why do they pay you such a pittance? Because they want to keep you hungry! A dog is kept hungry so that he leaps to attack when his trainer whistles. They keep you hungry to keep you angry, and then let slip the buzz word — 'immigrants', 'law and order', 'paedophiles' — and there you are, swarming with the savagery that stems from an empty gut.

Secondly, you say you get to bring down the big shots. But do you? Who comes before these courts? They are broken men, men who are already passé, chosen sacrifices thrown to you by the Jacks in Office as offal is thrown to a dog. They are sops, dangled before your eyes to give you the illusion of power and independence. The politicos want you to think you are getting the real big shots, but does the buck ever stop where it belongs? Don't you see, you're their tool. Your delusion of democracy is simply propping up the system.

13 **No.8 Melodrama and Chorus**

Procleon *(over music)*: *(as Anticleon)* Your addiction gives *them* power, not you. That's why I'd rather pay you myself, to save you from being taken for a fool. For the money you now get is fool's gold, *(singing)*
gold that shows you are all in their pockets!

Chorus: An ancient tract
Says that no-one should act
Till they've heard both sides of the story.
(to Procleon as Anticleon)
And so we must state
You have won the debate
And bathe in rhetorical glory.
So now we'll fight
With our personal blight
Of judiciary addiction.
We lay down our staves,
We don't want to be slaves
To the craving for a conviction.
(to Procleon as himself)
And you,

Procleon: *(as himself, snarling)* What?

Chorus: be warned!
You surely must see reason,
For you know it makes sense.
Don't think of it as treason,
No need to take offence.
Be glad your son is blessed with such sagacity
To help you to set your troubled psyche free.
Since good fortune has
Brought you a pearl without price,
You'd be insane
If you'd disdain
A loving son's sincere advice.

Procleon: You saps!

Chorus: And the boy is so nice!

Procleon: You've fallen for his dainty turn of phrase and jasmine aftershave! He's arguing us into oblivion, burying us in some old folk's home where we'll be shut up and go gaga watching the goldfish swimming round and round.

Chorus: Our leader now confesses,
Quite without duress,
All his excesses.

Procleon: Oh he does, does he?

Chorus: And so he may not regress,
He has forsworn
All abnormal behaviour,
And he reveres his son
As his one true saviour.

Procleon: Executioner more like!

Chorus: He'll reform
And once more conform
To the norm.
See how he licks
His need for a fix
Of tricksy
Legal jargon.

Procleon: Just one more subpoena, I beg you!

Chorus: We're sure he'll keep his bargain!

Procleon: *(sobbing)* It's the end. It's the bloody end! *(He goes out.)*

ACT II

CD 2 Track 1

No.9 Entr'acte and Introduction

(Same setting. Daytime. Procleon enters as the music ends.)

2

Procleon: Well, I was in the depths of depression, I can tell you! But Sandra has a smart idea. *(as Anticleon)* So you can't live without trials, lawyers, benches and all the rest of the paraphernalia? *(as himself)* No I can't! I'll die! In fact, I can already feel life ebbing away ... *(as Anticleon)* Then we'll set up a court right here, right by your own front doorstep, and this way, if you oversleep, you won't miss your place on the jury. And I'll even pay your jury fee. *(clinking coins) (as himself)* Oh, thanks very much. *(as Anticleon)* We've commandeered the pig-pen for the railings of the court and a couple of flower pots for voting urns. You'll have every comfort: a cock to crow when you doze off, something to nibble on while you're chewing over the evidence, and a piss pot for when you need it, papa. Keep filling it up and it'll double as a waterclock! *(as himself)* Very ingenious. Well, I don't mind if I do!

3

No.10 Melodrama and Chorus

Procleon *(over music)*: There you go. Oh blimey, he's got it all set up. He's even booked the regimental padre to bless the proceedings.

Padre: And to celebrate the peace that has so unexpectedly broken out, verily a peace which passeth all understanding, we shall sing to dedicate this suburban plot to a new world order, a world order that is free from discord and where the ruthless battle-zone of family life slumbers in the tranquility of universal armistice. *(singing)*
I call the court to silence for our inaugural prayer!

Chorus: Phoebus Apollo, mighty healer,
Grant of thy grace, we pray,
That on this most auspicious day
The power of the middle way
Brings new-found peace to feet of clay
That have been led astray.
All hail to thee, Paean!
All hail to thee, Paean!

Padre: Apollo of the pavement, pious protector of the privet, porch and patio, pray grant us your blessing. Accept this kitchen court as a new forum of justice. Here, may the sink of iniquity find its just disposal. May the implacable Wasp sheathe his scabrous sting, and may his supplicants bask in the benign zephyr of his mercy!

Chorus: 'Amen' we cry
And hope this tune'll
Sanctify
The new tribunal.
May the new jury never be hung,
And may its praises be sung.
Its chairman speaks with a silver tongue
And treats us wrinklies with respect:
Rare in one so young.
All hail to thee, Paean!
All hail to thee, Paean!

4

Padre *(after music)*: Let the jury be seated. No latecomers admitted!

Procleon: It's a beautiful moment which I'm just savouring when I'm gripped by a terrible panic. Who am I going to try? *(as Anticleon)* Don't worry, says Sandra, there is no greater hotbed of crime than the domestic hearth. *(as himself)* And at that very moment the cook comes screaming out of the kitchen: 'That foul smelling, hair dropping, slobber slavering hound Labes has just scoffed an entire cheese from the kitchen table!' Right! Let's have him up before the court this instant! Who's his defending council? *(as Anticleon)* A persuasive cur called Demadog! *(as himself)* That won't cut any ice with me! If that cheese isn't his last lunch, then this court is a dog's dinner. The facts bark for themselves: did he woof down this cheese or not? Summon the witnesses! *(as Anticleon)* Calling citizens Bowl, Pestle, Mortar, Cheesegrater, Pan and Wok to testifry!

5

No.11 March Past of the Witnesses

6

Procleon *(after music)*: *(as himself)* So, Wok, what's the evidence? *(as Wok)* Ah so, velly difficult to defend srandered dog, Rabes. But he dog serving nation. He not want to steal cheese, he want to catch thief. Yes, sir, he saw fry — stir-clazy, gleedy, thieving fry — aright on cheese and start to eat it. So dog jump on fry to save cheese, and dog eat cheese by mistake, arong with fry, and dog have bad diallhea ever since. Dog, he make big saclifice! *(as himself)* You know, I'm feeling most peculiar. A sneaking sensation of sympathy for the defendant is beginning to slither its way up my left leg ... What's happening? *(as Anticleon)* Sir, the dog begs for mercy and asks the court to consider the effect on his dependants. Calling Rover, Clover and Apple Turnover. Take the stand. Now, press your wet little noses against his cold cheek. And now look up at him with your great sad eyes. *(as himself)* I'm crying into my soup! My hand reaches for the voting pebble, and with a shuddering spasm of emotion I place it in the first urn! *(as Anticleon)* Not guilty! Labes is acquitted!
(as himself) Acquitted? Did I do that? Am I sunk so low? Bear me hence: a juryman once steadfast and implacable, and now just another dewy-eyed liberal!

(Procleon is led off sobbing.)

7

No.12 Chorus: Parabasis

Chorus:

Depart with our blessing; we wish you luck.
(addressing the audience)
We urge the thousands thronging the stalls:
Don't let your thoughts stray!
For when a pearl of our wisdom falls
It's a waste of our well-wrought play.
You create us.
Tell me, how do people rate us?
By the status
Of our spectators!

So in the future,
Dear subscribers,
If the author tries
Something new to take you by surprise,
Don't be truculent!
New can be succulent.
Do not dismember him,
Rather remember him.

Do not ask 'What was it?'
But deposit
His unconventional views
Safe in the closet.
For by this idolatry
Your shirts and your shoes
Will also be enthused,
Suffused with odours of orat'ry.

How we used
To rule the roost
When we bestrode
The dancing floor.
That was when
Men were men,
Strong in love and war.
The mad marines,
Battle hardened fighting machines!
Now the old lags
Are stooping.
We're starting to sag
And our mighty swords are drooping.
Golden blonds
Turned to swans.
And yet, these old sods'
Decrepit bodies
Still know what a rod is!
We Colonel Blimps
Still look back with pride
Unlike these wide boys of today:
Peacenik pansies, pederasts and pimps.

Chorus Leader:

If you wonder why a fellow
Of my age and social class
Struts, wasp-waisted, black and yellow
With a sting stuck to his arse —
Why, you cry, this armoured anus?
Then I will straightway explain,
And deploying words as plain as

Pikestaffs for your modern dumbed-down brain.

Chorus: We, who now parade before you
With our blades in our behinds,
We're the pure bred Attic heroes,
We're the race's hearts and minds.
We were then the famous few
Who stood there through the Blitz,
Stood to barricade the city
From the nasty Persian shits.
(They appear to see the enemy approaching.)
Balls of fire and mass destruction,
Poison gas insecticide,
They attacked without compunction,
Racist acts of vespicide.
(They fall back as if beaten, then move into battle.)
So, enraged, we charged to meet them,
Brandishing our sword and shield.
Our blood was up, we would defeat them
On that brutal battlefield.
Man to man, our foes surround us,
And we know we fight or die.
Arrows in thousands hail all round us,
Blotting out the blood darkened sky.
(They rush into the fight.)

Basses: Then beneath the lurid orange
Shadows of the setting sun

Tenors: Athena's owl took flight in anger
And we had them on the run.

Full Chorus: What a target! All those fleeing
Bottoms in their baggy breeks!
So we stung them (oh, what glee!)
Right in their wobbling flabby cheeks.
So from Samarkand to the Sahara
Every would-be warrior quails.
Wars on Wasps are a
Risky business:
There's a sting in our tails!
Feared on land and sea,
Bold youthful bodies in their majesty,
For once we'd proved their army a travesty.
It was the navy's turn: another victory!
Maybe our breath was not that sweet,
And we could not pose in cute positions,
And we never learnt to cheat
Like politicians,
But we had mastered
How to make a boat go faster.
We took town after town
In a wave of attacks.
From our bloody swords and axes
Flow our city's taxes.
We broke our bones
To feed effete Athenian drones.

Basses: If you would conduct a study
Who we are and what we do,
You'd conclude these bloody
People are just waspish through and through.

Tenors: No-one is so apoplectic,
None so testy or irate;
Grouch, curmudgeon, cynic or sceptic,
No-one's harder to placate.

Basses: And our social forms resemble
Habits of the wasp as well.

Tenors: For our angry mobs assemble
Swarming round a prison cell,

Basses: Buzzing close about the judges,

Tenors: Libel, Criminal or Divorce,

Basses: Working off our ancient grudges.
Get a buzz! Lay down the laws!

Full Chorus: Some just sit, their heads nodding,

Like grublets in the hive.
Their eyes are blank, their brains are plodding,
Can you spot if they're alive or not?

On the economic front we
Do as wasps to make ends meet:
Sting 'em all with bare effrontery,
Wasps must get enough to eat.
But there are still some among us,
Idle, parasitic drones,
Lax and spineless spongers, youngsters
Living on their student loans,
And of course these idle dropouts
Never do a stroke of work.
King and Country? What a cop out!
Types like that drive us berserk.
Watch them walk off with the money
That we gained with blood and sweat.
National Service? Don't be funny!
They just add to the National Debt!

So our rule on pay and pensions:
Stingless drones can't ride for free.
Spongers, this is our firm contention:
Whistle for your jury fee!

ACT III

8 **No.13 Entr'acte**

(Same setting. Evening. Procleon enters as the music ends, wearing fashionable clothes and dark glasses.)

9

Procleon *(after music)*: So, how do you like my new outfit? I feel like a Persian poodle, I can tell you. This is the new me. I've been made over, you see: soaped, shaved, coiffed and manicured. Sandra's taking me to a dinner party — très smart, the 'in' crowd, the cronies. And I've been given lessons in manners and conversation: how to drape myself onto a sofa and pick delicately at a sun-dried tomato; how to sip an organic avocado crush; and how to talk about Art — blah-de blah-de blah-de blah! Anyway, I'd better shut up — it's time to go. I'll let you into a secret: I intend to enjoy myself! *(He goes out.)*

10 **No.14 Chorus**

Chorus:

His army cloak,
His field canteen
Have all been cast aside
For the best bespoke,
And nouvelle cuisine!
And if this old fool
Learns what is cool,
His life could be right up to fashion
With his Gucci suedes
And Armani shades.
When a dog's getting old,
Near the end of his days,
It's hard to be told
'Just be bold, change your ways!
Dross can turn into gold'.
Can a leopard not
Change his spots?
He can surprise us
If he tries.
How do the bugs become
Butterflies?
Our hearts exude
Such gratitude
For his son's selfless attitude.
His father's rude
Contrary mood
Was so sweetly wooed.
Such devotion
Must be viewed
With profound emotion.

Such a young man
So richly imbued
Far beyond his years.
How could his plan
Be misconstrued?
It brings us close to tears.
For when his father called him a pseud
Pompous young prude,
He just pursued
His campaign
For a civilised
Parent until his aim
Was realised.

(Procleon bursts in, dishevelled, brandishing a stick.)

Procleon: Out of my way!...

11 **No.15 Melodrama**

Procleon *(over music)*: Out of my way, you bunch of faggots, you pussy-footing plonkers! It's party time! Party time! Sycophants! Lickspittles! Flatulent popinjays! Out of my way, all you riff-raff, out of my way or feel my stick!

12

Procleon *(after music)*: Great wine they had at that dinner! Really great wine! And lots of it! But after I'd told 'em all where they could stuff their pomegranate pine-nut parfait, I thought it on the whole advisable to withdraw. And I pass this bar with a really great little lap dancer doing her stuff — so I just grabbed her and said: 'Here, come along, darling, come along home with me'. Did they not like that! Quite a chase we've had! The barmaid's after me for three trays of drinks I knocked over. And I smashed in some twerp's window. And, oh dearie me, somehow this gent got a dent in his brand new Bentley. Now, where's that girl gone? *(looking round)* Ah, come here a minute, my love. I'll help you up. I've got a little bit of old rope in my pocket — you could hang on to that. I know it looks a bit worn and wrinkly but if you pull hard enough you can still make the bell ring! Oh, you're going to leave me standing are you? Oops, look out, here comes Sandra. *(as Anticleon)* Daddy! Daddy! You're an old pussy pinching drunkard and I'm taking you home at once! *(as himself)* Drunk? Me drunk? I might be punch drunk *(punches)* — and I laid Sandra clean out on the floor.

13 **No.16 Melodrama**

Procleon *(over music)*: Ta-ratata-ta, ta-ratata-ta, ta-ratata-tatata-TA! I can feel a dance coming on! You know, they've no idea what a dance is these days, mincing around trying to look cool.

(He demonstrates.)

No-one can wriggle their torso
Anymore, so
Watch my high stepping kicks,
My thigh slapping tricks,
My hip hip hip
Swinging the bits
A-ring ding dinging
Till my arsehole splits!

(He dances. As the music comes to a climax he staggers to a halt.)

I'm pooped! Bring on the professionals! Bet you a bottle they can't dance better than that! Nowhere near! I'm really judge and jury now: Angleterre, nul point!

(He falls asleep and dreams.)

14 **No.17 Melodrama**

(Music — a crab enters and dances.)

Procleon: I must be dreaming! I call for dancers, and on comes a crab. By jingo, a dancing crab!
(A second crab enters.)
And here comes another one! Ready for a knees up? I hope you're better than the last — he was a right load of old crab!
(Music — the second crab dances. A third crab enters.)
I don't believe it! Yet another one's waltzing in! Heat up the tatties, and we'll have smash and crab!
(Slow music — the third crab dances.)
Call that a waltz? Come on, maestro, beat faster or the mayonnaise'll curdle.
(Fast music)
More of 'em! Bring the whole family, Mr and Mrs Crab and their bolshie offspring ... Stalin Crab! Now, winkletoes, let's have a clamdango, a fruit de mer gavotto, a real eel conga!

No.18 Chorus and Dance

Chorus:

Now you wheezing old geezers,
Out of the way!
You've had your day,
The dance is beginning.
Feast your watery eyes
On the delicate thighs
And the pert little tops that are spinning.
(A ballet of sea creatures follows.)

(Music — First dance)
You crabs and crustaceans,
Your mad gyrations
Will whisk a brisk tarantella.
The boiling furor
Of a thermidor
Or the frisk of a bisque
Will gell in a swell
Paella!

(Music — Second dance)
So kick up your claws,
All you terpsichores,
And let us see your extension.
We have waited so long
For a glimpse of your thong,
We beg you, hold it in suspension.

(Music — Third dance)
You roisterous boisterous oysters,
You mobster lobster boy-sters,
Kick off your shells,
Ring-a-dem bells
For jumping jellyfish joy-sters!
All you little octopussies,
Offspring of the ocean,
Show your daddy your dainty tussies
And set them all in motion!

(Music — Fourth dance)
You roisterous boisterous oysters,
You mobster lobster boy-sters,
Kick off your shells,
Ring-a-dem bells
For jumping jellyfish joy-sters!
All you little octopussies,
Offspring of the ocean,
Show your daddy your dainty tussies
And set them all in motion!

If you're wondering 'What does it signify?
How does a dancing lobster dignify
My play?',
I would say
That though my fol-de-rol
May have no moral,
There never was a more uproarious
Exit for the chorus!

(Music — General dance. As it ends, the Company exit, leaving Procleon asleep and alone. During the last few bars of music he gets up and, as if in a dream, slowly dances out, muttering to himself 'Show your daddy your dainty tussies and set them all in motion'.)

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RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
LES GUÊPES

Si on excepte une radiodiffusion de 1972, la partition complète de la musique composée par Ralph Vaughan Williams pour une production de la comédie satyrique d'Aristophane *Les Guêpes* à l'Université de Cambridge en 1909 n'avait pas été entendue jusqu'à ce que cet enregistrement soit réalisé en 2005. Bien sûr, on en utilise souvent l'ouverture pour des débuts de concerts, et de nombreux mélomanes doivent connaître la suite en cinq mouvements que le compositeur tira de sa partition en 1912. Mais le reste, qui contient des pages spirituelles et ravissantes, est demeuré dans l'oubli. Ce fut la première grande partition de Vaughan Williams pour le théâtre, le prélude aux cinq opéras qu'il devait écrire au cours des cinquante années à suivre.

La tradition de représenter tous les trois ans une pièce grecque dans sa langue d'origine avec une musique de scène commandée exprès pour elle vit le jour à Oxford en 1880, et l'idée fut reprise par Cambridge deux ans plus tard. Lorsque le comité affecté aux pièces grecques de Cambridge se réunit le 4 décembre 1908, la décision fut prise d'inviter Vaughan Williams, qui avait lui-même étudié au Trinity College dans les années 1890, à écrire la musique destinée aux *Guêpes* pour le mois de novembre suivant. C'était là un choix audacieux. Le compositeur n'avait alors aucune œuvre d'envergure à son actif, ayant seulement connu le succès au Festival de Leeds en 1907 avec la brève ode chorale *Toward the Unknown Region*. Il était surtout connu comme l'auteur de quelques mélodies pour soliste, pour ses cycles de mélodies *Songs of Travel* et *The House of Life*, ses *Norfolk Rhapsodies*, et en tant qu'éditeur pour la publication du recueil *The English Hymnal*. En janvier 1908, il avait poursuivi trois mois d'études intensives à Paris avec Maurice Ravel, et celles-ci devaient avoir un effet considérable sur son développement. En l'espace de deux ans il composa *On Wenlock Edge*, la *Fantaisie sur un thème de Tallis*, un quatuor pour cordes ... et *Les Guêpes*. Il révisa aussi entièrement et acheva la grande œuvre chorale à laquelle il travaillait depuis 1903, *A Sea Symphony*.

À n'en pas douter, sa candidature fut soutenue par Hubert Parry, Charles Villiers Stanford et Charles Wood, qui avaient tous écrits des partitions pour des pièces grecques de Cambridge et avaient également été ses professeurs à un moment ou à un autre. Il travailla rapidement, permettant à Cambridge de graver et d'imprimer la partition pour voix et piano dès le milieu de l'été 1909. L'orchestration l'occupa du 16 septembre au 12 novembre. La première des six représentations fut donnée au New Theatre le 26 novembre avec Charles Wood à la tête d'un orchestre de vingt-quatre instrumentistes. Parmi les étudiants faisant partie de la distribution figuraient Steuart Wilson, destiné à devenir un ténor soliste de premier plan et qui devait finir par occuper des postes à haute responsabilité à la BBC et à l'Opéra de Covent Garden, Denis Browne, le compositeur (et ami de Rupert Brooke) qui fut tué pendant la Première Guerre mondiale en 1915, et Miles Malleson, qui devint un grand acteur de genre au théâtre et au cinéma. La musique, dont une grande partie dut paraître franchement « moderne » à l'époque, fit grand bruit et reçut bon nombre de critiques favorables (comme celle d'Edward J. Dent entre autres).

Lorsque Vaughan Williams prépara la Suite en 1912, il étoffa l'orchestration pour inclure des vents par paires, quatre cors et deux trompettes et il effectua d'importantes révisions. Le passage « March Past of the Witnesses » (le Cortège des témoins tel qu'il apparaît dans la pièce) devint « March Past of the Kitchen Utensils » (le Cortège des ustensiles de cuisine), différant de l'original non seulement par son orchestration mais aussi par l'interpolation d'une section centrale dérivée d'un chœur de la fin du deuxième acte. C'est dans ce numéro qu'en 1909 un membre de la section des percussions reçut l'indication « d'agiter un sac plein de porcelaine brisée ». Quelqu'un qui savait que la mère de Vaughan Williams était une Wedgwood lui demanda si la porcelaine utilisée serait de cette marque illustre. « Bien sûr », répondit-il, « c'est la seule porcelaine capable de donner le son approprié ! »

Parmi les délices qui attendent les auditeurs du présent enregistrement, en plus du plaisir d'entendre la grande mélodie centrale de l'Ouverture dans une version chorale, figurent les citations par Vaughan Williams d'œuvres d'autres compositeurs, ce qu'il ne faisait généralement pas mais qui, il l'avait compris, correspondait à la légèreté des *Guêpes*. Dans les danses du n° 17, par exemple, vous pourrez entendre quelques notes de la *Mélodie printanière* de Mendelssohn (*Frühlingslied* op. 62 n° 6), une référence à un air du *Roi carotte* d'Offenbach (1872) et à la valse de *La Veuve joyeuse* (créée à Londres en 1907). Dans le n° 15, Vaughan Williams cite la musique écrite par Parry pour la pièce grecque de 1883 (*Les Oiseaux* d'Aristophane). Il transforme le thème de Parry en une marche pentatonique et ajoute une note dans la partition : « Avec mes excuses à un grand compositeur anglais ». Le thème d'introduction du n° 16 s'appuie sur une chanson populaire du Cambridgeshire, *The lady looked out*, recueillie par Vaughan Williams en juin 1908. C'est la seule citation directe d'une chanson populaire dans cette partition, mais on y trouve de nombreux passages modaux qui dérivent de chansons populaires et servent à relier l'Angleterre édouardienne aux modes de la Grèce antique.

La section la plus ambitieuse de la partition est de loin le n° 12, la Parabase, longue plage de musique au cours de laquelle on devine déjà le Vaughan Williams de la *Sérénade à la musique* et du *Pilgrim's Progress*. Sur les mots « something new to take you by surprise » (« quelque chose de nouveau pour vous surprendre »), on trouve une citation du *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* de Debussy, qui en 1909 était bien loin d'être aussi connu qu'il l'est aujourd'hui. (Précisons que dans les comédies de la Grèce antique, la parabase était une partie chantée par le chœur et adressée au public au nom du poète et ne présentant pas de lien avec l'action de la pièce.) Si une autre des robustes mélodies chorales vous rappelle peut-être quelque chose, c'est parce que Vaughan Williams l'a reprise pour en tirer la mélodie de l'hymne *Marathon* (« Servants of the great adventure ») pour l'édition augmentée des *Songs of Praise* (1931). Du début à la fin de cet ouvrage, il utilise beaucoup le mélodrame (un discours parlé accompagné de musique).

C'est à Ursula, la veuve du compositeur, que nous devons la résurrection de cette œuvre passionnante et révélatrice : elle a chargé le chef d'orchestre Igor Kennaway de préparer une édition de la partition complète à partir du manuscrit autographe. Celle-ci et la partition pour voix et piano publiée à Cambridge en 1909 constituent la base de la présente édition interprétative publiée par Faber Music. La traduction de 1909 de la partition pour voix et piano est lourdement expurgée et il serait impossible de l'employer de nos jours. Aristophane avait écrit une satire mordante au sujet du système des jurys athéniens, pleine d'un humour turbulent et truculent. David Pountney a écrit un nouveau texte tenant compte de l'évolution du public actuel, plus difficile à choquer. Comme il le dit, « Aristophane écrivait ses comédies pour des occasions particulières et elles sont pleines de références à la politique athénienne de l'époque ou à des personnalités alors très connues. J'ai évité d'inclure dans le texte de telles références contemporaines, de peur qu'elles ne deviennent vite aussi démodées et incompréhensibles que celles de l'original. Toutefois, pour toute représentation publique de cette version, il est tout à fait approprié d'enrichir le texte avec des références à l'actualité et il serait même regrettable de ne pas le faire ! »

Dans ses comédies, Aristophane faisait habituellement appel à trois personnages : le protagoniste, l'antagoniste et le chœur. Parfois le chœur prenait part à l'action et la commentait. Dans la version de Pountney, un narrateur unique incarne à la fois le protagoniste et l'antagoniste. Le premier, Procléon, est un vieux soldat aux vues étroites. Son fils Anticléon, que son père appelle sarcastiquement Sandra, est l'antagoniste, un jeune homme sans scrupules, encore en devenir, et qui est très soucieux des apparences. Et si à la fin du troisième acte, vous êtes intrigués par l'apparition de crabes dansants, c'est qu'ils font référence au politicien athénien Karkinos (qui signifie « crabe »), dont les trois fils mènent la danse, comme il est possible qu'ils l'aient fait lors de la création de la pièce, en 410 avant J-C environ. Je n'essaierai pas ici de résumer l'intrigue. Procléon sera votre guide, dans son langage haut en couleurs, et l'envoûtante musique de Vaughan Williams fera le reste.

Michael Kennedy [Traduction : David Ylla-Somers]

LES GUÊPES

Le point de départ de *Jurassic Park* est le postulat selon lequel, à partir d'un insecte préservé dans de l'ambre, l'ADN d'une ère entière peut être déduit et même recréé. C'est un peu la même chose quand on travaille sur *Les Guêpes*, mais avec des conséquences beaucoup moins dramatiques. C'est un objet merveilleusement fossilisé qui nous permet de mieux connaître l'esthétique d'époques révolues : les traditions de la comédie d'Aristophane — une structure formelle complète contenant un mélange de références aujourd'hui totalement indéchiffrables et d'autres encore étonnamment d'actualité ; l'époque du Cambridge d'avant-guerre, en sécurité et content de soi sous sa cloche de verre ; l'époque de la spécialisation hellénique du XIXe siècle — respectueuse et respectable ; une époque très particulière de la musique anglaise — des mélodies populaires pimentées d'un soupçon de moutarde française.

Aristophane devait poser de gros problèmes à l'esthétique « de Cambridge » de l'époque, son esprit se rapprochant plus de celui du music-hall que de la mentalité d'une grande université anglaise. Son humour était insolemment public, paillard et polémique, destiné à être joué à l'occasion de ce qui ressemblait à la Fête de la Bière de Munich : une fête populaire en plein air, tapageuse et généreusement arrosée. La combinaison de l'esthétique de Cambridge d'alors et d'une perception hautement révérencieuse de la culture hellénique donne ici quelque chose de délicatement poli, de suprêmement précieux, et de spirituel dans une tradition insolite et fantasque, c'est-à-dire, et c'est peut-être regrettable, aussi défunte dans la vie théâtrale actuelle que le sont les dinosaures. Je sais bien de quoi je parle : ayant moi-même été étudiant à Cambridge dans les années 1960, j'ai naturellement plongé dans l'univers peu ragoûtant du théâtre (ou ce qui passait pour tel) naturaliste britannique qui semble aujourd'hui tout aussi délicieusement ringard.

Il a donc fallu rechercher un certain équilibre pour obtenir une version qui soit à la fois viable et, je l'espère, divertissante — sans dépasser certaines limites, bien sûr. Avec une version entièrement calquée sur Aristophane, on aurait pu se demander pourquoi la musique n'était pas composée par Frank Zappa. La traduction anglaise existante — étonnante pièce d'époque en soi — aurait été involontairement drôle tout en faisant écran à la qualité et l'originalité véritables de la musique de Vaughan Williams. Je me suis donc efforcé, dans la traduction chantée, d'égaler un peu de l'humour d'Aristophane en laissant libre cours à mon penchant pour les rimes à la Cole Porter — style de cabaret léger qui je l'espère demeure dans les limites disciplinaires et stylistiques de la musique.

Pour la narration, je me suis inspiré de la tradition de la comédie de type monologue de bar, et de la longue lignée de « vieux bonshommes » qui ont fait les beaux jours de la radio et de la télévision au cours des cinquante dernières années. Il est salutaire que le personnage principal d'Aristophane, Procléon, soit encore totalement d'actualité avec ses manières de rouspéteur intolérant. Son fils, le personnage très plausible du jeune homme à la mode, rappelle bon nombre des aspects les moins séduisants des compères du « New Labour » de Blair. Le fait de fondre le protagoniste et l'antagoniste, en plus des passages plus brefs traditionnellement joués par un troisième acteur, en un narrateur unique présente un défi amusant pour un acteur de genre, mais sans se démarquer du processus du théâtre grec : après tout, le chœur s'exprime pour les deux points de vue, tout comme le fait l'auteur. (La comédie grecque, comme les théâtres du West End londonien d'aujourd'hui, était économe d'acteurs, d'autant plus que ceux-ci, contrairement au chœur, étaient payés par l'état !)

Ajoutons qu'en tant qu'unique rôle chanté, c'est le chœur, et notamment sa pièce de résistance traditionnelle, la parabase, qui constitue l'aspect le plus original et intéressant des *Guêpes*. La parabase était la partie centrale des comédies d'Aristophane — l'occasion pour lui de faire directement valoir ses talents d'auteur après la fin des bouffonneries de l'*agon* (le conflit) — et elle présentait une structure rythmique claire développée sur sept sections différentes : le prélude, l'allocution adressée au public, la *patter song* rapide — pas vraiment représentée ici — strophe, l'épirrhème, l'antistrophe (reflétant le rythme de la strophe) et l'antiépirrhème, reflétant l'épirrhème. *Les Guêpes* contenait une forme particulièrement complète, et le résultat est une scène dramatique pour chœur qui dure quinze minutes — ce qui était sans précédent dans le domaine lyrique et qui constituait le plus grand défi que Vaughan Williams avait à relever. Il l'aborde plutôt en compositeur coloriste qu'en dramaturge, et encore moins en musicien de show-biz, mais il réalise un tour de force varié, expressif et plein de caractère, nettement plus mélancolique que ce qu'Aristophane avait en tête mais correspondant assez bien aux réflexions d'un groupe de vieux soldats fatigués — plus enclins aux réminiscences qu'aux faits d'armes.

Une parabase est une digression (littéralement « un pas de côté ») dans laquelle l'auteur s'adresse directement aux spectateurs, ainsi qu'Aristophane le fait effectivement dans le cas présent, commençant par les flatter puis les priant, idée amusante, de remiser ses idées nouvelles et originales avec leurs chaussettes et leurs chaussures, afin que leur garde-robe soit « imprégnée des odeurs de l'éloquence ». Mais il permet alors au chœur de devenir très dramatique dans sa re-création du passé héroïque des Guêpes, avec scènes de combat et manœuvres incluses, donnant au chorégraphe du chœur (le *chorodidaskalos*) l'occasion de déployer ses talents. Soit dit en passant, quand on connaît les impératifs des opéras de notre époque, il est intéressant de noter que dans les théâtres grecs, le « sponsor » (*choregus*) était le riche homme d'affaires ou mécène qui était désigné (attention, pas de discussion possible !) par l'*archon* (le magistrat) pour payer le chœur. Dans le cas des *Guêpes*, Aristophane devait avoir un mécène généreux car il fit le choix d'écrire une parabase exceptionnellement détaillée et variée requérant de nombreuses répétitions. Vaughan Williams a brillamment suivi son exemple.

David Pountney [Traduction : David Ylla-Somers]

SIR MARK ELDER CBE DIRECTION MUSICALE

Mark Elder est devenu directeur musical du Hallé en septembre 2000. Fréquemment invité à travailler avec bon nombre des orchestres symphoniques et des troupes d'opéra les plus en vue de la planète, il a été fait Compagnon de l'Ordre de l'Empire britannique par la reine en 1989 et a remporté un Prix Olivier pour le travail remarquable qu'il a effectué à l'English National Opera lorsqu'il en était le directeur musical entre 1979 et 1993. Il a été le premier chef invité de l'Orchestre symphonique de la Ville de Birmingham de 1992 à 1995, et directeur musical de l'Orchestre philharmonique de Rochester aux USA de 1989 à 1994. Il a également été premier chef invité de l'Orchestre symphonique de la BBC et des London Mozart Players.

HENRY GOODMAN NARRATEUR

Henry Goodman s'est vu décerner le Prix Olivier pour ses interprétations de Shylock dans *Le Marchand de Venise* et de Charles Guiteau dans *Assassins*. Il est également lauréat des Prix Variety Artists du meilleur acteur pour Billy Flynn dans *Chicago* et Nathan Detroit dans *Guys and Dolls*. Il a fait ses débuts à Broadway en 1998 dans le rôle de Serge dans *Art*. On a aussi pu l'applaudir au théâtre dans les rôles-titres du *Tartuffe*, de *Henry VIII*, de *Périclès* et de *Richard III*, et dans les rôles principaux de *La Chatte sur un toit brûlant*, *After the Fall*, *Volpone* et de nombreuses autres pièces. Au cinéma, il a joué dans *Moi, Peter Sellers*, *Churchill*, *Le Rideau final*, *The Labyrinth*, *Coup de foudre à Notting Hill*, *Queen of Hearts*, *Le Fils de la Panthère rose*, *Le Saint* et *Parties intimes*. On l'a également beaucoup vu à la télévision, notamment dans *Le Marchand de Venise*, *Foyle's War*, *Mesure pour Mesure*, *Lovejoy*, *The Arabian Nights*, *After the War*, *Dirty Tricks*, *Murder Rooms* et *99-1*.

RICHARD SUART CHEF DE CHŒUR/AUMÔNIER

Richard Suart a entamé sa carrière dans le monde lyrique avec l'English Music Theatre Company et Opera Factory, et il est aujourd'hui très demandé, notamment dans les théâtres musicaux, les opéras contemporains et bien sûr, en tant que comédien dans un répertoire plus traditionnel. Il présente également un one-man show à succès intitulé *As a Matter of Patter*, soirée qui fait la part belle aux chansons de Gilbert et Sullivan et émaillée de dialogues et d'anecdotes ; il l'a interprété avec sa femme dans tout le Royaume-Uni, en Irlande, au Moyen-Orient et en Afrique du Sud.

HALLÉ & **HALLÉ CHOIR**

Le Hallé, le plus ancien orchestre britannique professionnel, a été fondé à Manchester — en même temps que le Chœur du Hallé — par le pianiste et chef d'orchestre Charles Hallé, et a donné son premier concert au Free Trade Hall de Manchester en 1858. Le Hallé demeure l'un des ensembles les plus éminents de Grande-Bretagne et depuis 1996, il se produit dans sa nouvelle salle de Manchester, The Bridgewater Hall, où il propose environ quatre-vingt concerts par an, en plus d'en donner plus de cinquante autres dans toute la Grande-Bretagne et autour du monde. Pour obtenir plus d'informations sur le Hallé, visitez le website de l'orchestre : www.halle.co.uk

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
DIE WESPEN

Abgesehen von einer Rundfunksendung im Jahre 1972 ist die vollständige Partitur der Musik, die Ralph Vaughan Williams 1909 für eine Inszenierung von Aristophanes' satirischer Komödie *Die Wespen* an der Universität Cambridge schrieb, erstmals in der vorliegenden Einspielung von 2005 zu hören. Die Ouvertüre ist natürlich als Auftakt zu Konzerten beliebt, und viele Hörer kennen sicherlich die fünfsätzige Suite, die der Komponist 1912 aus der Partitur extrahierte. Doch der Rest des Werks, das geistreiche und wunderschöne Musik enthält, geriet in Vergessenheit. Es handelte sich um Vaughan Williams' erste umfangreiche Bühnenmusik, Vorläuferin der fünf Opern, die er in den folgenden fünfzig Jahren schreiben sollte.

Die dreijährliche Darbietung eines altgriechischen Dramas in der Originalsprache mit speziell dafür komponierter Bühnenmusik wurde 1880 in Oxford eingeführt, und zwei Jahre später wurde die Idee in Cambridge übernommen. Bei einer Sitzung des Komitees für Griechisches Drama in Cambridge am 4. Dezember 1908 wurde beschlossen, Vaughan Williams, der in den 1890er-Jahren am dortigen Trinity College studiert hatte, mit der Musik zur Aufführung der *Wespen* im folgenden November zu beauftragen. Das war ein kühner Beschluss. Zu diesem Zeitpunkt konnte er noch keine bedeutenden Werke vorweisen, mit Ausnahme seines Erfolgs beim Leeds Festival 1907 mit der kurzen chorischen Ode *Toward the Unknown Region*. Er war vorwiegend bekannt als Komponist einiger Sololieder, der Liederzyklen *Songs of Travel* und *The House of Life* sowie der *Norfolk Rhapsodies*, und als Herausgeber des kurz zuvor veröffentlichten Gesangbuchs *The English Hymnal*. Im Januar 1908 war er nach Paris gegangen, um dort drei Monate lang intensiv bei Maurice Ravel zu studieren, und dies sollte unermessliche Auswirkungen auf seine weitere Entwicklung haben. Innerhalb der folgenden zwei Jahre hatte er *On Wenlock Edge*, die *Tallis Fantasia* sowie ein Streichquartett komponiert — und *Die Wespen*. Daneben revidierte und vollendete er ein groß angelegtes Chorwek, an dem er seit 1903 gearbeitet hatte, nämlich die *Sea Symphony*.

Zweifellos wurde seine Kandidatur von Hubert Parry, Charles Villiers Stanford und Charles Wood befürwortet, die einerseits allesamt Partituren für Inszenierungen griechischer Dramen in Cambridge verfasst und andererseits zu verschiedenen Zeiten Vaughan Williams unterrichtet hatten. Er arbeitete schnell und ermöglichte es Cambridge, die Gesangspartitur bereits im Hochsommer 1909 stechen und drucken zu lassen. Die Orchestrierung beschäftigte ihn vom 16. September bis zum 12. November. Die erste von sechs Aufführungen fand am 26. November im New Theatre statt, wobei Charles Wood ein vierundzwanzigköpfiges Ensemble dirigierte. Zur Besetzung gehörten unter anderen die Studenten Steuart Wilson, später ein renommierter Tenorsolist, der dann hohe Ämter bei der BBC und beim Royal Opera House innehaben sollte, Denis Browne, der Komponist (und Freund des Dichters Rupert Brooke), der 1915 im Ersten Weltkrieg umkam, sowie Miles Malleson, aus dem ein führender Film- und Bühnenschauspieler wurde. Die Musik, die seinerzeit größtenteils ausgesprochen "modern" geklungen haben muss, erregte einiges Aufsehen und wurde mit zahlreichen positiven Kritiken bedacht (unter anderem von Edward J. Dent).

Als Vaughan Williams 1912 die Suite einrichtete, erweiterte er die Orchestrierung, die nun doppelt besetzte Holzbläser, vier Hörner und zwei Trompeten umfasste, und unternahm ausführliche Änderungen. Der "Vorbeimarsch der Zeugen" (wie es in der Theaterfassung heißt) wurde zum "Vorbeimarsch der Küchengeräte", der sich vom Original nicht nur in der Orchestrierung unterschied, sondern auch durch das Einfügen eines Mittelteils, der auf einen Chor am

Schluss des zweiten Akts zurückging. Im Rahmen dieser Nummer war 1909 ein Mitglied der Schlagzeuggruppe angewiesen, einen "Sack voll zerbrochenem Prorzellan" zu schütteln. Ob es sich wohl um Wedgwood-Porzellan handeln müsse, wurde Vaughan Williams von jemandem gefragt, der wusste, dass seine Mutter der Familie Wedgwood entstammte. "Natürlich", erwiderte er, "kein anderes Porzellan würde den richtigen Klang erzeugen!"

Zu den Genüssen, die den Hörer der vorliegenden Aufnahme erwarten, gehören neben der Freude, die großartige zentrale Melodie der Ouvertüre in einer Chorfassung zu erleben, auch Vaughan Williams' Zitate aus den Werken anderer Komponisten — so etwas war sonst nicht seine Sache, doch er erkannte, das es dem heiteren Grundton der *Wespen* angemessen war. Beispielsweise bekommt man ein Stückchen aus Mendelssohns *Frühlingslied* op. 62, Nr. 6 zu hören, einen Hinweis auf eine Arie aus Offenbachs *Le roi carotte* (1872) und auf den Walzer aus der *Lustigen Witwe* (die 1907 in London Premiere hatte). In der Nr. 15 zitiert Vaughan Williams aus der Musik, die Hubert Parry für das griechische Drama von 1883 (Aristophanes' *Die Vögel*) geschrieben hatte. Er verwandelt Parrys Thema in einen pentatonischen Marsch und fügt in die Partitur eine Fußnote ein: "Mit der Bitte um Verzeihung an einen großen englischen Komponisten." Das einleitende Thema von Nr. 16 beruht auf einem Volkslied aus Cambridgeshire, *The lady looked out*, das Vaughan Williams im Juni 1908 gesammelt hatte. Es ist das einzige direkte Volksliedzitat in der Partitur, doch finden sich daneben zahlreiche modale Passagen, die aus der Volksmusik abgeleitet sind und dazu dienen, das edwardianische England am Beginn des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts mit den Modi der griechischen Antike zu verbinden.

Der weitaus anspruchsvollste Abschnitt der Partitur ist Nr. 12, die Parabase, ein ausführliches Musikstück, in dem wir Vorahnungen des Vaughan Williams der *Serenade to Music* und des *Pilgrim's Progress* hören. Bei den Worten "something new to take you by surprise" [etwas neues, euch zu überraschen] ist ein Zitat aus Debussys *Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune* eingefügt — das Werk war 1909 keineswegs so bekannt wie heute. (Die Parabase war übrigens in der Komödie der griechischen Antike ein vom Chor gesungener Einschub, der sich im Namen des Dichters ans Publikum richtete und mit der Handlung des Stücks nichts zu tun hatte). Kommt uns eine weitere der robusten Chormelodien bekannt vor, so liegt das daran, dass Vaughan Williams sie sich für die Hymne *Marathon* ("Servants of the great adventure" [Im Dienst des großen Abenteuers]) für die 1931 erweiterte Ausgabe der *Songs of Praise* auslieh. Durchweg kommt das Mittel des Melodramas (Deklamation mit untermalender Musik) zum Einsatz.

Der Impetus für die Wiederbelebung dieses eindrucksvollen und bedeutenden Werks kam von der Witwe des Komponisten, Ursula, die den Dirigenten Igor Kennaway damit beauftragte, nach dem urschriftlichen Manuskript eine Edition der Dirigierpartitur zu erstellen. Diese und die 1909 in Cambridge veröffentlichte Gesangspartitur bilden die Grundlage der gegenwärtig bei Faber Music aufgelegten praktischen Ausgabe. Die englische Übersetzung in der Gesangspartitur von 1909 ist schwerstens "gereinigt" und könnte heutzutage unmöglich verwendet werden. Aristophanes hat eine beißende Satire auf das athenische Gerichtssystem geschrieben, voller grotesker Einlagen und obszönem Humor. David Pountney hat einen neuen englischen Text verfasst, der in Betracht zieht, dass das heutige Pulikum einiges mehr verträgt. Er meint dazu: "Aristophanes schrieb seine Komödien zu bestimmten Anlässen, und sie sind voller Verweise auf die athenische Politik und bekannte Persönlichkeiten seiner Zeit. Ich habe darauf verzichtet, in den Text entsprechende Hinweise auf Heutiges einzufügen, denn die würden bald ebenso veraltet und unverständlich wirken wie jene im Original. Doch wäre es in jeder öffentlichen Aufführung dieser Fassung durchaus angebracht, den Text mit aktuellen Hinweisen auszuschmücken, ja, es wäre geradezu feige, es nicht zu tun!"

Aristophanes setzte in seinen Komödien in der Regel drei Figuren ein: den Protagonisten, den Antagonisten und den Chor. Manchmal wurde der Chor in die Handlung einbezogen und kommentierte sie. In Pountneys Fassung stellt ein einzelner Erzähler sowohl den Protagonisten als auch den Antagonisten dar. Der erstere, Procleon, ist ein alter Soldat mit bigotten Ansichten. Sein Sohn Anticleon, vom Vater spöttisch Sandra gerufen, ist der Antagonist, ein skrupelloser Jüngling, hinter dem Geld her und sehr auf Äußerlichkeiten bedacht. Und sollten Sie am Ende des dritten Akts vom Auftreten tanzender Krabben verblüfft sein — sie gehen auf den athenischen Politiker Karkinos zurück (sein Name bedeutet Krabbe), dessen drei Söhne den Tanz anführen und das womöglich bei der Uraufführung des Stücks um das Jahr 410 v.Chr. tatsächlich getan haben. Ich will mich nicht an eine Zusammenfassung der Handlung wagen. Procleon wird Sie mit farbenfrohen Worten einführen, und Vaughan Williams' verlockende Musik besorgt den Rest.

Michael Kennedy [Übersetzung Anne Steeb/Bernd Müller]

DIE WESPEN

Der Film *Jurassic Park* beginnt mit der Prämisse, dass aus einem in Bernstein eingeschlossenen Insekt die DNS einer ganzen Ära erschlossen und dann sogar neu erschaffen werden kann. Die Arbeit an den *Wespen* hat davon einiges, wenn auch die Konsequenzen etwas weniger dramatisch sind. Das Werk ist ein wunderbar versteinertes Objekt, das uns Einsicht in die Ästhetik vergangener Epochen verschafft: die Traditionen der aristophanischen Komödie — eine in sich geschlossene Formenwelt, die eine Mischung aus heute gänzlich unverständlichen und immer noch verblüffend aktuellen Anklängen enthält; die Epoche der Unversität Cambridge vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg, selbstgefällig abgeschottet wie unter einer Käseglocke; die Epoche der Hellenistik des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts — ehrfürchtig und auf Schicklichkeit bedacht; eine bestmmte Epoche "englischer Musik" — Volkslieder mit einem Schuss französischem Senf.

Das, was man als "Cambridge-Ästhetik" jener Zeit bezeichnen könnte, dürfte mit Aristophanes ein erhebliches Problem gehabt haben, denn der stand im Geiste dem Varieté näher als einem College in Cambridge. Seine Komik war schamlos öffentlich, zweideutig und politisch streitlustig, gedacht zur Aufführung bei Feiern, die sich am ehesten mit dem Münchner Oktoberfest vergleichen lassen — ein Volksfest unter freiem Himmel, ausgelassen und trinkfreudig. Die Kombination damaliger Cambridge-Ästhetik mit einer höchst andachtsvollen Sichtweise altgriechischer Kultur bringt hier etwas taktvoll Respektvolles hervor, ausgesprochen vornehm und geistreich in jener versponnenen und humorigen Tradition, die im Theater unserer Zeit (vielleicht traurigerweise) so ausgestorben ist wie die Dinosaurier. Ich kenne das Gefühl: Als Student im Cambridge der Sechzigerjahre vertiefte ich mich natürlich in die neonaturalistischen Zeitstücke, die damals als Theater durchgingen und heute ebenso lachhaft passé wirken.

Eine gewisse Balance muss also gefunden werden, will man eine realisierbare und hoffentlich unterhaltsame Fassung erstellen — natürlich in gewissen Grenzen. Bei einer ganz und gar aristophanischen Version würden wir uns alle wundern, warum die Musik nicht von Frank Zappa komponiert wurde. Die existierende englische Übersetzung — auf ihre eigene Art ein erstaunliches Zeitdokument — hätte nur Anlass zu unbeabsichtigtem Amüsement gegeben und

damit die wahrhafte Qualität und Originalität der Musik von Vaughan Williams überschattet. Ich habe mich deshalb beim Erstellen der gesungenen Übersetzung bemüht, etwas von Aristophanes' Humor mit meinem Spaß an Reimen im Sinne von Cole Porter zu paaren — ein lockerer Kabarett-Stil, der hoffentlich die Disziplinen und stilistischen Grenzen der Musik respektiert.

Was den Text des Erzählers angeht, so habe ich auf die Tradition der Stand-up-Comedy zurückgegriffen, und auf die lange Reihe "alter Knacker", die über die vergangenen fünfzig Jahre hin Radio- und Fernsehprogramme bereichert haben. Es ist bemerkenswert, dass Aristophanes' Hauptfigur Procleon auf seine griesgrämige und bigotte Art auch heute noch absolut zeitgemäß ist. Sein plausibel wirkender Sohn, der immer mit der Mode geht, lässt viele der weniger attraktiven Aspekte von Tony Blairs "New Labour"-Kumpanen anklingen. Das Zusammenfassen von Protagonist und Antagonist sowie der Nebenrollen, die traditionell vom dritten Schauspieler gegeben wurden, in einem Erzähler bietet einerseits eine amüsante Herausforderung für einen Charakterdarsteller, ist jedoch andererseits dem Procedere des altgriechischen Theaters keineswegs fremd: Schließlich spricht der Chor für beide Seiten des Geschehens, und ebenso für den Autor. (Die altgriechische Komödie ging, ebenso wie das moderne kommerzielle Theater, sparsam mit Schauspielern um, insbesondere deshalb, weil sie im Gegensatz zum Chor vom Staat bezahlt wurden!)

Und als einzige Gesangsrolle ist es der Chor, besonders in der Parabase (seinem traditionellen Paradestück), der den originellsten und interessantesten Aspekt der *Wespen* darstellt. Die Parabase war der zentrale Bestandteil der aristophanischen Komödie — sie bot dem Autor die Chance, sich unmittelbar als Urheber hervorzutun, nachdem der Agon (die Streitszene mit all ihren grotesken Effekten) abgeschlossen war, und sie hatte eine klare rhythmische Struktur, die über sieben Abschnitte hin entwickelt wurde: Vorspiel, Anrede an das Publikum, schnelles Parlando-Lied — das hier nicht vorkommt — Strophe, Epirrhem (Dialogverse), Antistrophe (die den Rhythmus der Strophe widerspiegelt) und Antiepirrhem als Gegenstück zum Epirrhem. *Die Wespen* enthielt eine besonders vollständige Form der Parabase, und das Ergebnis ist eine fünfzehnminütige dramatische Szene für Chor, etwas, wofür es in der Opernliteratur keine Parallele gibt — sie bot Vaughan Williams seine größte Herausforderung. Er stellt sich ihr eher als Kolorist denn als dramatischer oder gar Show-Komponist, doch sie ist eine Glanzleistung abwechslungsreicher Atmosphären und Stimmungen — eindeutig wehmütiger, als es Aristophanes recht gewesen wäre, aber durchaus angemessen als Betrachtung über eine Gruppe müder alter Soldaten, die eher zu Reminiszenzen als zu Taten neigen.

Die Parabase ist eine Abschweifung (im Wortsinne ein Seitenschritt), mit der der Autor sich direkt ans Publikum wendet, wie es Aristophanes in diesem Fall auch tut, indem er ihm erst schmeichelt und es dann höchst amüsant auffordert, seine neuen und originellen Ideen zusammen mit Socken und Schuhen aufzubewahren, sodass seine Garderobe "von den Düften der Rhetorik durchdrungen" sein möge. Doch dann überträgt er dem Chor höchst dramatische Episoden, wenn er die heroische Vergangenheit der Wespen samt Schlachtenszenen und Manövern nachvollzieht, was dem Chor-Choreographen (dem Chorodidaskalos) Gelegenheit gibt, sein Können zu demonstrieren. Übrigens mag es als Fußnote zu den Zwängen des modernen Opernbetriebs von Interesse sein, darauf hinzuweisen, dass im altgriechischen Theater der "Sponsor" (Choregus) ein wohlhabender Geschäftsmann oder Gönner war, der vom Archon (dem Magistrat) dazu bestimmt wurde, den Chor zu bezahlen (wohlgemerkt ohne Einspruchsrecht!). Im Falle der *Wespen* muss Aristophanes einen großzügigen Mäzen gehabt haben, denn er schrieb eine außergewöhnlich detaillierte und abwechslungsreiche Parabase, die ausgiebige Proben erfordert haben dürfte. Vaughan Williams hat dem angemessen entsprochen.

David Pountney [Übersetzung Anne Steeb/Bernd Müller]

SIR MARK ELDER CBE DIRIGENT

Mark Elder wurde im September 2000 zum Musikdirektor des Hallé berufen. Er ist als Gast zahlreicher führender Sinfonieorchester und Opernbühnen gefragt; 1989 verlieh ihm die britische Krone den Orden CBE, und im selben Jahr wurde er für seine hervorragende Arbeit an der English National Opera, wo er von 1979 bis 1993 als Musikdirektor tätig war, mit dem Olivier Award ausgezeichnet. Er war von 1992 bis 1995 Erster Gastdirigent des City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra und von 1989 bis 1994 Musikdirektor des Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra in den USA. Außerdem hat er als Erster Gastdirigent des BBC Symphony Orchestra und der London Mozart Players gewirkt.

HENRY GOODMAN ERZÄHLER

Henry Goodman hat den britischen Olivier-Theaterpreis für seine Darstellungen des Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* und als Charles Guiteau in *Assassins* gewonnen, außerdem den Variety-Preis für die beste Schauspielleistung als Billy Flynn in *Chicago* und Nathan Detroit in *Guys and Dolls*. Sein Debüt am Broadway gab er 1998 as Serge in *Art*. Zu seinen weiteren Bühnenrollen gehören die Titelgestalten in *Tartuffe*, *Henry VIII*, *Pericles* und *Richard III* sowie Hauptrollen in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *After the Fall*, *Volpone* und zahlreiche weitere. Zu den Filmen, in denen er gespielt hat, zählen *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers*, *Churchill*, *The Final Curtain*, *The Labyrinth*, *Notting Hill*, *Queen of Hearts*, *Son of the Pink Panther*, *The Saint* und *Private Parts*. Seine zahlreichen Fernsehrollen umfassen *The Merchant of Venice*, *Foyle's War*, *Measure for Measure*, *Lovejoy*, *The Arabian Nights*, *After the War*, *Dirty Tricks*, *Murder Rooms* sowie *99-1*.

RICHARD SUART CHORFÜHRER/KAPLAN

Richard Suart begann seiner Opernkarriere bei der English Music Theatre Company und der Opera Factory; heute ist er viel gefragt, besonders in den Sparten Musiktheater, zeitgenössische Oper und natürlich als Komiker im eher gängigen Repertoire. Daneben präsentiert er eine höchst erfolgreiche Einmann-Show unter dem Titel *As a Matter of Patter*, ein Abend, der aus Liedern (hauptsächlich von Gilbert und Sullivan), Dialogen und Anekdoten besteht und den er zusammen mit seiner Frau in ganz Großbritannien, in Irland, dem Nahen Osten und in Südafrika aufgeführt hat.

HALLÉ & **HALLÉ** CHOIR

Hallé, das älteste professionelle Sinfonieorchester Großbritanniens, wurde in Manchester — zusammen mit dem Hallé Choir — von dem Pianisten und Dirigenten Charles Hallé gegründet und hat dort in der Free Trade Hall im Jahre 1858 sein erstes Konzert gegeben. Das Hallé ist und bleibt eines der angesehensten Ensembles in Großbritannien; seit 1996 gibt es in der Bridgewater Hall, seinem neuen Haus in Manchester, rund achtzig Konzerte im Jahr sowie über fünfzig weitere im eigenen Land und in aller Welt. Weitere Informationen über das Hallé hält die Website des Orchesters bereit: www.halle.co.uk