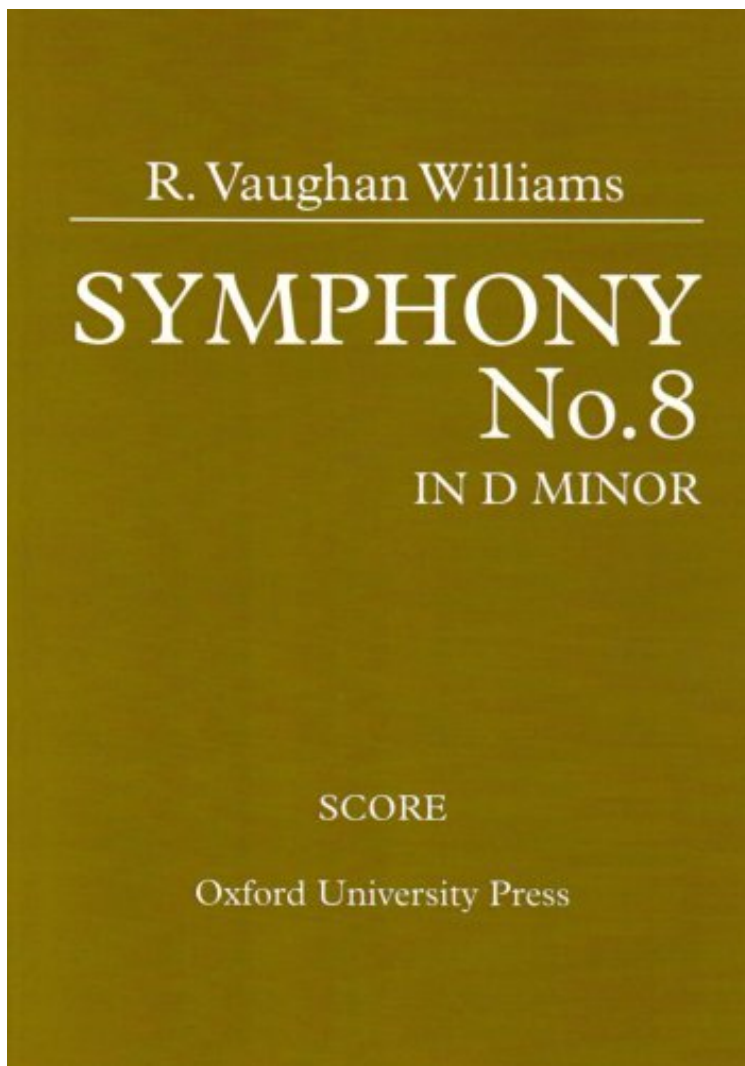


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Symphony No. 8: Study score

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Gamelan Symphony ? ?By Brian H. Vaughan Williamss Symphony No. 8 in D minor was composed between 1953 and 1955. It was the first of his symphonies which Vaughan Williams numbered. Sir John Barbirolli conducted the premiere of the piece on 2 May 1956 with the Halle Orchestra. The Eighth Symphony is the shortest of Vaughan Williamss nine symphonies, with a typical performance clocking at just

under a half hour, yet is remarkably inventive, especially in the composers experiments in sonority. Not only does he use a much-expanded percussion section, including all the phones and spiels known to the composer (as well as three tuned gongs, the same as were used in Puccinis Turandot), but the two central movements use only the winds and strings section respectively. Among his symphonies the Fourth Symphony is the only other one to end loudly (the others all have quiet conclusions, often with the Vaughan Williams fingerprint niente). The work is in four movements: 1. Fantasia (Variazioni senza tema) (variations without a theme) - the composer also referred to this as being seven variations in search of a theme. Even though the variation structure predominates the acute listener may notice elements of sonata form. 2. Scherzo alla marcia (for wind instruments only) - this short, quick march (with trio) is somewhat akin to that of a British military band. The trio section revisits Vaughan Williamss pastoral style. 3. Cavatina (for bowed strings only) - This movement, in a five-part rondo form, has a meditative character and includes important solo passages for violin and cello. The main theme bears a clear resemblance, which Vaughan Williams acknowledged, to the Passion chorale (O sacred head, now wounded) that Bach used several times in the St. Matthew Passion and elsewhere. 4. Toccata - the finale (entitled Toccata to indicate its virtuoso nature) contains much exuberant writing for the percussion section. Harmonically, the movement seems uncertain of whether to be in D minor or D major.

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About the AuthorIn 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.