



THE COMPOSER IN QUESTION
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
TUESDAY 2 DECEMBER

Ralph Vaughan Williams (12 October 1872 – 26 August 1958), composer of symphonies, chamber music, opera, choral music, and film scores, is arguably the greatest British composer since Henry Purcell. In a long and extensive career, he composed music notable for its power, nobility and expressiveness, representing, perhaps, the essence of 'Englishness'. He was among the very first to travel into the countryside to collect folk-songs and carols from indigenous singers; the mark these songs left on him was profound and permanent, influencing the texture, contours and melodies of his work. As musical editor of *The English Hymnal* he composed several hymns that are now world-renowned (*For all the Saints, Come down O love Divine*). He helped to edit *The Oxford Book of Carols*, with similar success. Before the war he met and sustained a deep friendship with the composer Gustav Holst of whom Vaughan Williams wrote, "...Holst discovered the feeling of unity with his fellow men which made him afterwards a great teacher". Just before the War broke out, Vaughan Williams produced some of his most famous music 'The Lark Ascending', his first opera 'Hugh the Drover', and 'The London Symphony'. In the summer of 1914, aged 41, enlisting as a private in the Ambulance Corps, he witnessed horrific deaths and injuries as a stretcher bearer in France and Salonika. Deeply affected by the carnage and the loss of close friends such as the composer George Butterworth, his experiences are echoed in the exquisite Pastoral Symphony No. 3. He died on 26th August 1958 and his ashes are interred in Westminster Abbey, near those of Purcell.

MEET 10:30 am coffee for 11 am lecture at the Art Workers' Guild
ENDS 3:30 pm at the Art Workers' Guild
COST £85 members, £95 non-members, including coffee, light lunch with wine