

# Gloriae Dei Cantores offers an enterprising revival of Vaughan Williams' "Pilgrim's Progress"

October 28, 2017 at 2:29 pm

By Aaron Keebaugh

Ralph Vaughan Williams was both a skeptic and spiritualist. His second wife and widow, the writer and poet Ursula Wood, recalled Vaughan Williams in her memoirs as an outspoken young atheist who softened in later years. The composer's own views on his religious faith raised more questions than answers: He referred to himself as a Christian agnostic.

It's little wonder then that John Bunyan's morality play *Pilgrim's Progress* occupied a large part of Vaughan Williams' life. He held the story — quite literally — close to his heart, having carried a copy with him in his breast pocket when he served in the British Army during the First World War. His settings of the story even found their way into a number of his works, including his Fifth Symphony. After a gestation of nearly 45 years, *Pilgrim's Progress* resulted in his powerful, though often neglected, opera of the same name.

The last time *Pilgrim's Progress* was heard in New England was in 2005, when the enterprising choral group Gloriae Dei Cantores, based in Orleans on Cape Cod, offered the East Coast premiere. The organization, along with the Elements Theatre Company, resurrected this musical treasure Friday night at the Church of the Transfiguration in Orleans to celebrate 500 years of the Protestant Reformation. Bunyan's story, it was made clear, still resonates with listeners.

The reason why *Pilgrim's Progress* receives such limited attention has to do with its sizable cast of nearly forty soloists and its overtly religious and rather flat, linear storyline. But when set to an engaging production, as Friday's performance was, the opera can offer a palpable emotional journey.

Pilgrim longs for a better life and deserts his home and family in the City of Destruction to walk a straight and narrow path. His burden is lifted when he converts to Christianity, which Vaughan Williams downplays in favor of a more universal spirituality. Armed as a warrior of God, he confronts and defeats the demonic Apollyon. Pilgrim meets additional challenges in the city of Vanity, where he curses the vapid lifestyles of the crowd, who, in turn, condemn him to death. But Pilgrim escapes bondage and makes his way to the Delectable Mountains, where Shepherds point the way to the Celestial City. When he arrives in Zion he is welcomed with open arms.

Though it is Vaughan Williams' most religious work, *Pilgrim's Progress* isn't rife with the drama one often finds in traditional opera. But Sister Danielle Dwyer's production and the chorus's choreography delivered engaging action sequences. Pilgrim's battle with Apollyon had a visceral excitement. In the arming of Pilgrim, the chorus wielded quarterstaves and swords to finely choreographed effect. Vanity Fair was a scene of modern decadence, complete with Starbucks' coffees, hippie dress and pot brownies.

Evocative video cast on three large screens provided scenery and backdrop for a wide stage in the church's grand sanctuary. Moving pictures of mountains and waterfalls conjured the utopian House Beautiful, while images of forests and meadows depicted the lush pasture on the way to the Delectable Mountains. In the Valley of Humiliation, dark images set an aptly hellish tone.

But it is the music that ultimately makes the story so enjoyable, and the singing in this production was, for the most part, consistent.

Richard K. Pugsley brought a world-weary, rough-edged tone to the role of Pilgrim. His best singing came in his jail scene, where he captured the character's humility and resilient faith. John E. Orduña's baritone was smooth-toned and bold as the Evangelist, while Doug Jones gave a bright and powerful performance as Lord Lechery in "Come and Buy".

Andrew Nolen's rich bass well suited the roles of Apollyon and Lord Hate-Good. Eleni Calenos brought a radiant sound and vocal elegance to her brief roles as the Branch Bearer and Voice of a Bird.

As Herald, Peter McKendree lacked the clarion voice needed to pull off "This is the King's Highway" effectively. Precision and grace marked the performance of Rachel Pfeiffer, Sister Rosemary Ingwersen, and Lindsey Kanaga as the Three Shining Ones. Other standouts included Aaron Sheehan, who found the sincere humor of Mister By-Ends, and Paul Scholten, Brother Richard Cragg and Orduña, who found the warm spiritualism of the Three Shepherds. Scholten, as the imprisoned John Bunyan, sang with prayerful reverence.

But the heroes of this performance were the members of Glorïae Dei Cantores. Whether cast as doleful creatures writhing on the floor or as a heavenly choir, they sang with radiant tone and pristine blend. “He Who Would Valiant Be” rang in the space with the conviction of a country preacher’s Sunday sermon.

Set up backstage, the orchestra, conducted by James Jordan, delivered Vaughan Williams’ lush score with sensitivity. Warm brass chords tilted the music towards light while solo viola, cello, clarinet, and oboe added shades of pastoral warmth. *Pilgrim’s Progress*, after all, remains a journey in sound.

***Pilgrim’s Progress* will be repeated 7:30 Saturday and November 6 and 7 at the Church of the Transfiguration in Orleans. [gdcchoir.org](http://gdcchoir.org)**

# The Boston Musical Intelligencer

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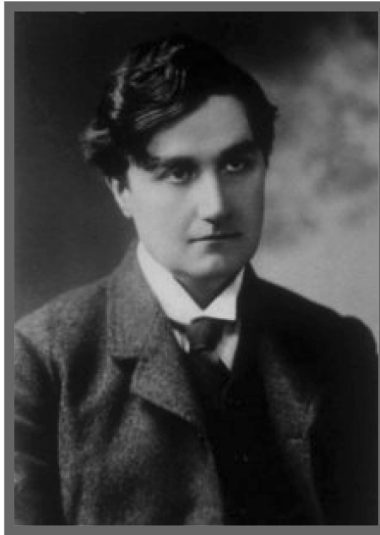
ABOUT THE JOURNAL

OCTOBER 18, 2017

IN: NEWS & FEATURES

## Rare Opera Marks Luther's 500<sup>th</sup>

by BMINT STAFF



Ralph Vaughan Williams ca 1900

Gloriæ Dei Cantores and Elements Theatre Company will present Ralph Vaughan Williams's opera, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, fully and hugely staged. For the first time in 12 years, since these forces presented the New England Premiere of the work in 2005, the production is returning here.

Sponsored in part by the Vaughan Williams Charitable Trust of London, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is the featured event of an international symposium commemorating the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. The show runs October 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>, and November 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> at 7:30PM at the stunning and acoustically rich sanctuary of the Church of the Transfiguration, Orleans.

Vaughan Williams's worked on the opera over 45 years. According to conductor Jim Jordan, "It's the ultimate expression of the wide variety of his musical style, exhibiting fabulous transparency of orchestration and a luminous sound. It will come to life amidst frescoes, mosaics, bronze, glasswork, and stone carvings depicting the story of human salvation from Genesis to Revelation. Replete with a 40-person main cast, a 60-person chorus, and a full orchestra—almost a one-to-one ratio with the audience seating, it also requires almost 300 original costumes and thousands of rehearsal hours." The opera is set against abstract projections and cutting-edge theater technology designed by Michael Counts, Inc. The

main cast includes highly acclaimed artists including Richard K. Pugsley, Andrew Nolen, Paul Scholten, Eleni Calenos, Martha Guth, Kathryn Leemhuis, Aaron Sheehan, and John Orduña.

Conductor Jim Jordan responded to our questions:

**FLE: You say that “Vaughan Williams, an admitted agnostic, changed the main character’s name from “Christian” to “Pilgrim” so that the central message encompassed all faiths.” Why is it apt for Luther’s 500<sup>th</sup> birthday considering that Luther, not a man to embrace people of all faiths, also had perhaps less to do with the Reformation in the Church of England than others? Wasn’t Wesley the man for that?**

JJ: Perhaps some historical context may be helpful here. October 31, 2017 marks 500 years from the day that Martin Luther presented his famous Ninety-five theses—points of argument in theology and church practice—nailing them to the door of All Saints’ Church in Wittenberg where he taught in the university. It was this public act that sparked what has come to be known as the Reformation. The Wesley brothers actually came much, much later, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, long after the Church in England had undergone the reforms of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. And though the English Reformation had its own particular origins, the teachings of Luther and other Reformers on the continent were widely known and highly influential throughout that period.

Vaughan Williams presented himself as a “Christian agnostic.” The term itself is paradoxical, which, like the nature of his religious convictions, remains a bit of a mystery. Nevertheless, his life’s work on behalf of the Church of England is evidence of his deep commitment to the use of high quality music and sacred texts, both for worship and on the concert stage. Like Luther, Vaughan Williams believed that music had both moral as well as aesthetic consequences. You may remember that in his preface to a massive collection of music for worship, Luther wrote that, “next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world.” Vaughan Williams’s music, wedded to one of the most familiar written products of Protestant Christianity—Bunyan’s “The Pilgrim’s Progress”—makes the opera a wonderfully apt expression of faith for observing this 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation.

**“Vaughan Williams described the work as a “morality,” rather than an opera, and intended it for performance on the stage”**

**That quote seems almost to contradict itself. Please elaborate.**

Just as Vaughan Williams changed the protagonists’ name from the original “Christian” to “Pilgrim”, broadening his character into a type of “Everyman” archetype, his instructions to put a “morality” onto the public stage (albeit with all of the musical and theatrical components needed for an opera) continues that same vision, making this tale of transformation available to a much wider and varied audience.





Interior of the Basilica

**Is the complicated “allegorical” nature of the Bunyan simplified into dramatic interactions that we can follow?**

The libretto and music are combined in traditional operatic fashion with allegory translated into an extraordinary structure that comes to life through various solos, duets, trios and quartets as well as large choruses, all married together through a fabulous combination of lighting, video projections and staging.

**There are forty singers not including the chorus. How do we keep them straight?**

Through a combination of both Vaughan Williams’s writing and the staging of our current production, the relationships between characters come vividly to life. Also, there are a number of musical themes associated with various characters, both through what they sing and the orchestra supporting them, that act similarly to “leitmotifs.”

**How many people onstage altogether including chorus and orchestra?**

All told between soloists, chorus and orchestra, there are as many as 130 people, at certain moments, on stage.

**Will the show run in the sanctuary as something like a chancel drama? Anything like “Everyman?”**

The opera is being performed in the entire sanctuary and nave area of the Church of the Transfiguration.

**Tell us about the scenery and props and costumes.**

The scenery is being created with projections designed by S. Katy Tucker and Michael Counts Inc. based out of New York. This team also produced *The Ouroboros Trilogy* in Boston last year. There will be props, and almost 300 costumes total.

**Where will the orchestra be seated?**

It's a rather unique set-up – two levels of players in the north side aisle of the church located behind a scrim wall.

**Is there a part for the magnificent Skinner organ?**

Delighted that you remembered this fantastic instrument. Vaughan Williams did not actually compose any part for the organ so it will remain silent for this production.

**Does the opera sound anything like any of Vaughan William's more familiar works such as his hymns, *Songs of Travel* or his *Serenade to Music*?**

Listeners will hear reminiscences of VW's famous Tallis Fantasia (in the gorgeous string writing) as well as his well-known Symphony #5 (1943) where he incorporated themes from the opera.

**Tell us about your collaborators, the Elements Theater Company.**

Elements Theatre Company was founded in 1993 and is directed by Sr. Danielle Dwyer. The company performs year-round at Paraclete House and the Church of the Transfiguration on Cape Cod in Orleans, MA. They tour nationally and internationally, performing and leading workshops and discussions at theaters, conferences, schools, and religious organizations.

Sr. Danielle is the director of this production as well, aiding in the process of combining the multiple disciplines of theater, story telling, music, and voice, into a cohesive production of "The Pilgrim's Progress" opera. This has been a wonderful exchange between members of Elements Theatre Company and Gloriæ Dei Cantores as they share aspects of their disciplines with one another, creating a wonderful collaborative experience for all members involved.

**And remind us of the recent activities and accomplishments of the Gloriæ Dei Cantores**

GDC's recent recording of Rachmaninoff's "All-Night Vigil" has garnered extensive critical acclaim and last Fall, the choir presented concerts of the Mozart "Requiem" and Britten's "The Company of Heaven"—a rarely heard masterpiece.

# The Boston Musical Intelligencer

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OCTOBER 31, 2017

IN: REVIEWS

## Take a Pilgrimage to Orleans

by SUSAN MIRON



Richard K. Pugsley as Pilgrim (with his burden)(T Charles Erickson Photography)

Ralph Vaughan Williams may best be known for his “Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis,” *A Sea Symphony*, “Five Mystical Songs,” and *A Lark Ascending*. His opera (or Morality as he called it) *Pilgrim’s Progress*, which emerges from near-oblivion every few decades, hardly skyrocketed him to fame. Its most recent New England performance came 12 years ago through the efforts of many of the same forces as this production, including *Gloriæ Dei Cantores* and *Elements Theatre Company*. The opera constitutes the crown jewel of an international symposium commemorating the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, held at the majestic Church of the Transfiguration in Orleans, Massachusetts.

The composer is said to have carried a copy of “The Pilgrim’s Progress” by

John Bunyan in the inside pocket of his uniform when he served in World War I. Yet, even before that, he conceived the idea of making an opera or “Morality” out of Bunyan’s 17<sup>th</sup>-century Christian allegory about a man’s journey from the “City of Destruction,” to the “Celestial City.” Four plus decades later, he brought the idea to fruition for a 1951 premiere at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, when he was nearly 80. The gargantuan blend of opera and oratorio him took some 45 years to compose. With its 40-person main cast, a 60-person chorus, and a full orchestra—almost a 1 to 1 ratio with the audience, it is an enormous—and enormously pricey—show. Complete with almost 300 original costumes, countless rehearsal hours, and a **huge** number of singers with whom to

organize rehearsals, it required a village of volunteers to help out. Their collective efforts paid off in spades: gorgeous music sung and played beautifully in a glorious *mise en scene*. To "universalize" Bunyan's allegory, Vaughan Williams changed the central character's name from Christian to Pilgrim. This production's director, Danielle Dwyer, describes this opera as fusing, three centuries: the work of Bunyan and Vaughan Williams and "their zeal, conviction, and unswerving faith in the spiritual journey of the human soul." Its unusually striking Christian imagery seems slightly less than universal, but that is a small quibble.

Numerous things strike the audience upon walking into church's huge performance space—the entire transept and nave areas of the Church of the Transfiguration. The director illuminated mosaic, paintings and sculptures at momentous times in the opera, and on the long stage as many as 130 people appeared. From behind a screen, the large orchestra enlivened the space with detailed, responsive and handsome tones. Harpist Jane Soh, oboists Daniel Stackhouse and Jane Murray and bassoonist Daniel Beilman made particularly distinctive and moving contributions. Two huge panels (with a small one in the middle) serve as the backdrop for shimmeringly beautiful, ever-changing evocative landscapes which illustrates the pilgrim's journey and evoke scenes of nature, including moving waterfalls, stalactites and stalgmities, mountains and valleys, and dreamscapes galore. For visual delights alone, it's worth seeing this show. With all the non-stop singing, light design, architecture, orchestral colors (which Vaughan Williams does so very well), the chorus's garb and synchronized dancelike movements, provocative literary and biblical texts, one got a real sense of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The principals' costumes and masks absolutely stunned. The hair and make-up people outdid themselves, deploying a pharmacy's worth of iridescent foundation—just perfect for a production on the weekends straddling Halloween.

Kudos for the ravishing choral singing, so integral to the opera, to their music director, Richard K. Pugsley who also excelled in the fraught role of Pilgrim. He is Artistic Director and conductor of Gloriam de Cantores, and also sang Pilgrim in the 2005 New England Premiere. Baritone John E. Orduña brought fervency to the roles of Evangelist and Shepherd; bass-baritone Andrew Nolan essayed Apollyon and Lord Hate-Good with both clarity and expressivity. (Here, the reviewer must pause to admit one of her favorite aspects of book, "Pilgrim's Progress," are the names of people and places- Slough of Despond, the Delectable Mountains—and characters—walking allegories—with names like Lord Lechery, Madame Bubble, Madam Wanton, Pliable and Obstinate, and Mister and Madam By- Ends, portrayed in honeyed tones to comic perfection by tenor Aaron Sheehan and Sr. Estelle Cole). The balance of the large cast, interacted effectively with real acting chops and vocal commitment. The small army of seamstresses deserve separate applause, and the many visual effects made theatrical coups.





Chorus in Valley of Humiliation (T Charles Erickson Photography)

Conductor: James E. Jordan

Chorus Master: David Chalmers

Director: Danielle Dwyer

Projections designer: S. Katy Designer

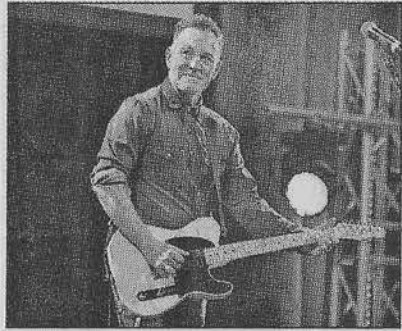
Lighting designer: Scott Stipetic, Shane Cassidy

Those who love Vaughan Williams's music should progress in a pilgrimage to the Church of the Transfiguration in Orleans, Massachusetts, where the run continues Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Susan Miron is a book critic, essayist, and harpist. She writes about classical music and books for The Arts Fuse. Her last two CDs featured her transcriptions of keyboard music of Domenico Scarlatti.**

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

QUESTIONS? Tim Miller, features editor | 508-862-1140 | tmiller@capecodonline.com | fax: 508-771-3292



**Bruce Springsteen, shown performing on Nov. 1, 2016, at the Stand Up For Heroes concert in New York, will appear in a solo show combining songs from his career with readings of his best-selling memoir "Born to Run" on Broadway at the Walter Kerr Theatre. [GREG ALLEN/INVISION FILE]**

## Springsteen, SpongeBob bound for Broadway

**By Mark Kennedy**  
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — On Broadway over the next few months, you can catch a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, a pair of big-name comedians, a "Downton Abbey" star and an appearance by Squidward in human form. Here's a look at some of the highlights of the first half of the 2017-18 Broadway season:

### Look up

Amy Schumer and Steve Martin will team up for laughs — one onstage and the other off it. The

## Emphasis on opera ... and more

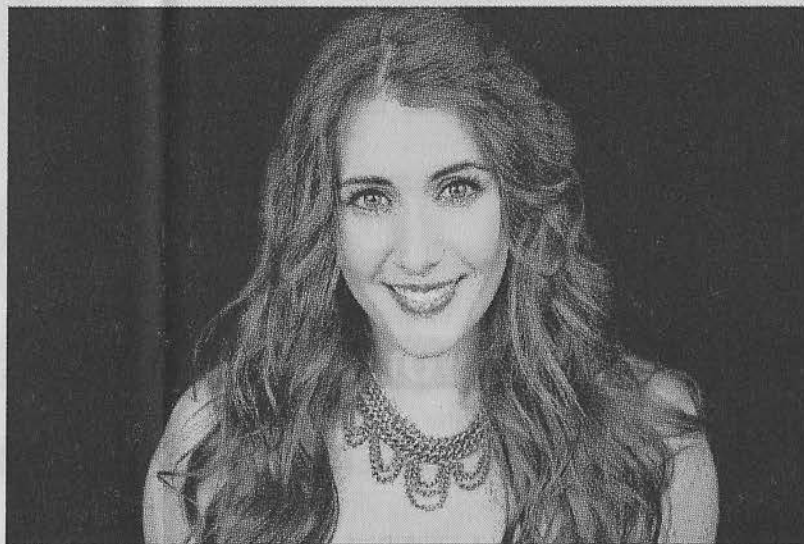
**'Pilgrim's Progress' in Orleans, Cape Symphony programs among fall music highlights**

**By Keith Powers**  
Contributing writer

Classical music presentations this fall on the Cape are highlighted by two entirely different operatic presentations: Ralph Vaughan Williams' rarely performed "The Pilgrim's Progress," staged by the orchestra and chorus of Gloriam Dei Cantores along with Elements Theatre Company, and the Cape Symphony, which opens its season with selections from some of the most well-known operas ever written.

Vaughan Williams put everything he had into his "Pilgrim's Progress." Bits of music he had composed over the course of the previous four decades figured into the score; he wrote the libretto, with the help of his wife, Ursula Wood, and oversaw the premiere performances. Operatic in scope, Vaughan Williams himself called the piece a "Morality" — a nod to the allegorical nature of John Bunyan's original.

The work remained close to the heart of the British composer, and its rare stagings are a glimpse into his genius. The combined forces of GDC and Elements Theatre will mount the production Oct. 27 and 28, and Nov. 3 and 4 at the Church



**Soprano Chelsea Basler will be one of the singers performing arias during the Cape Symphony's season opener. [MICHELLE MATTOX]**

of the Transfiguration in Orleans.

Danielle Dwyer directs, James Jordan conducts, and GDC artistic director Richard K. Pugsley steps off his usual place on the podium to sing the lead role of the Pilgrim ([www.gdcchoir.org](http://www.gdcchoir.org); 508 240-2400).

The Cape Symphony Orchestra brings a blend of operatic highlights, pops pleasers and classical exotica to the Barnstable Performing Arts Center stage this fall. The 2017-18 season opens Saturday and Sept. 17 with opera highlights from Puccini, Verdi, Mozart and more — a collaboration between the CSO and the singers from the Boston Lyric Opera.

Soprano Chelsea Basler and mezzo Heather Gallagher headline

the soloists, who will sing selected arias from "Tosca," "The Magic Flute," "Rigoletto" and others. The orchestra will do its part, serving up overtures by Wagner, Beethoven and Mozart.

The opera program kicks off the CSO's Masterworks subscription series. The second program in the Masterworks series takes a much different turn — toward Scandinavia. Music of Grieg, Nielsen and Sibelius — his anthemic "Finlandia" — fill the Nov. 4 and 5 concerts with Nordic atmospheres. Cellist Bo Ericsson and pianist Knut Erik Jensen join the CSO as soloists.

The CapePops series — always fantastically popular with audiences — opens with three shows on Oct. 14 and 15. The concerts feature the



**Richard K. Pugsley, artistic director and conductor of Gloriam Dei Cantores, will sing the lead role of the Pilgrim in "Pilgrim's Progress." [STEVE SHERMAN]**

smooth guitarist/vocalist John Pizzarelli, channeling the musical spirit of Nat King Cole. "Unforgettable"? You know it, with songs like "Mona Lisa," "Ramblin' Rose," and "Paper Moon" ([www.capesymphony.org](http://www.capesymphony.org); 508 362-1111).

Falmouth's Highfield Hall quietly presents stellar young performers each season, and this fall is no different. Ukrainian pianist Anastasia Seifetdinova begins the season Sept. 24, followed by Italian pianist Sandro Russo on Oct. 8. The violin/



Saturday September 14, 2019

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# New Production of Ralph Vaughan Williams' 'The Pilgrim's Progress' Magnificent



British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams arrives at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden for the first performance of his opera titled "The Pilgrim's Progress." London, Apr. 26, 1951. (AP Photo)

By [Deal Hudson](#)

Monday, 30 October 2017 04:46 PM

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From its first performance in 1951, "[The Pilgrim's Progress](#)," an opera by Ralph Vaughan Williams has suffered from a checkered history on stage. Its Covent Garden premiere was criticized for its lack of "theatricality," and the attempt at a revival the following year was a failure.

A subsequent and successful performance by the Royal

Northern College of Music of Vaughan Williams' "morality," as he preferred to call it, and probably saved the piece from being assigned to musical oblivion. And, it was the same John Noble who sang the Pilgrim in 1954 who sung the role for the 1971 recording by Sir Adrian Boult for EMI/Angel.

The late conductor Richard Hickox championed "Pilgrim" with a Chandos recording in 1998 and a Sadler Wells performance in 2008, but it wasn't fully staged again in the UK until 2012. The English National Opera production was praised for its music but, once again, questions about its "dramatic viability" were raised by the critics.

Those of us who greatly admired the recordings of "The Pilgrim's Progress" and knew about its rocky performance history have wondered if a concert performance was the best way to hear what is one of this composers' masterpieces. I can now safely claim, however, that such a conclusion would be wrong. The performances held on [October 27 and 28 at the Church of the Transfiguration in Orleans, Massachusetts](#), prove that "The Pilgrim's Progress" is indeed an opera, and a very good one.

The internationally known choir Glorïae Dei Cantores and the Elements Theatre Company combined with invited soloists and members of the Community of Jesus to mount this production with 40 in the cast, 60 in the chorus, and a full orchestra, providing a near one-to-one ratio of audience to performers inside the cathedral-like Church of the Transfiguration, itself a wonder to behold.

Dr. James Jordan conducted with a fully idiomatic feel for various sound worlds of Vaughan Williams. The opera was written over a space of 40 years, thus, containing the pantheistic majesty of the 1st "Sea" Symphony (1910), the English pastoralism of the 3rd Symphony (1921), the dissonant anxieties of the 4th (1935) and 6th (1948), the probing, inward spirituality of the 5th (1943), and the roguish charm of the Tudor Portraits (1935). The orchestral soloists, in particular, rose to the occasion when the musical narrative fell to them alone.

Director Sr. Danielle Dwyer, however, has to be congratulated on demonstrating the true operatic nature of Vaughan Williams "morality." Employing three screens as backdrops, Sr. Danielle worked with projection designer Kay Tucker to create a backdrop that not only provided a dramatic visual context but also kept the audience oriented to the Pilgrim's place in the journey.

Given the performance space of the nave and the choirs, the stage was placed on one side of the aisle and the audience on the other. The stage created by placing one fixed platform in the middle and two movable ones to the sides. The 300 original costume designs were an integral part to the performance's



visual impact.

Whoever it was who criticized the lack of “theatricality” in the work’s premiere would have to eat his words after seeing this production. Soloists, chorus, and cast members moved back and forth the length of stage, often within arm's length of the front row of the audience. They sang, danced, contorted, prayed, tempted, and convincingly blandished swords and staffs.

But "The Pilgrim’s Progress" cannot work without great singing and lots of it — there are over 41 solo roles. But even more challenging is the need to have tenors, baritones, and sopranos who can sing the composer’s sometimes subtle, sometimes soaring, melodies with firm pitch and legato. On that score, they all delivered.

Richard R. Pugsley fully embodied the anguish and searching Pilgrim and made the most of Vaughan Williams' greatest moments, such as the encounter with the “Shepherds on the Hill” which was musically thrilling. Paul Scholten, playing both John Bunyan, who appears at the beginning and the end, and one of those Shepherds, but he also delivered the famous “Watchful’s Song” with complete authority and tender beauty. John. E. Orduña’s playing the demanding role of the Evangelist never wavered, singing the demanding role, lying high in the baritone range, with ringing security and felt devotion.

At the other end of the morality scale came Lord Lechery who was deliciously, and unapologetically, portrayed by Doug Jones. Andrew Nolen used his beautiful base to be appropriately menacing as Apollyon and bring a dandyish charm to Lord Hategood. Aaron Sheehan was a comic and vocal standout as the disingenuous Mister By-Ends and well-partnered by Sr. Melody Edmonds his Madam By-Ends. Br. Richard Cragg who sang the Interpreter and one of the Shepherds showed particular sensitivity in the vocal lines he shared with the Pilgrim. Soprano Eleni Calenos sung the roles of the Branch Bearer and the Voice of the Bird effortlessly, her high notes firm and clear. (However, her “Bird’s Song,” sung from behind the screen could have been less covered by the men’s voices on stage.)

Special mention should be made of the Glorïae Dei Cantores’ contribution to the performance — every chorus was delivered with a precision of beauty that would compare to the world’s greatest choirs. Along with Jordan’s conducting, they created a seamless operatic performance out of an opera long thought to be dramatically episodic. Bravo!

"The Pilgrim's Progress" will be repeated on November 3 and 5 at the Church of the Transfiguration. Call 508-240-2400 for tickets.

**Dr. Deal W. Hudson took over Crisis Magazine in 1995, leaving in 2010 to become president of Catholic**

**Advocate. While at Crisis, Hudson led the Catholic**

**Advocate. While at Crisis, Hudson led the Catholic voter outreach for President George W. Bush in 2000 and 2004, and later advised the campaigns of both John McCain and Donald Trump on Catholic outreach. In 2014, he began his weekly two-hour radio show, "Church and Culture," on the Ave Maria Radio Network, and launched [www.thechristianreview.com](http://www.thechristianreview.com) in 2015. His books include "Happiness and the Limits of Satisfaction" and "Onward Christian Soldiers: The Growing Political Power of Catholics and Evangelicals in the United States." To read more of his reports — [Click Here Now.](#)**

the Cultural Center of Cape Cod in South Yarmouth. The book was one of three winners last year of the Newbery Honor for distinguished contribution to American literature for children from a division of the American Library Association. The coming-of-age story, set in a small Pennsylvania town during World War II, has been adapted by Susan Kosoff, co-founder of Wheelock Family Theatre and CCTC/HJT board member, and will be directed by company artistic director Nina Schuessler. The adaptation was previewed earlier this month at a reading at the cultural center.

The company, at 105 Division St., West Harwich, kicked off its season this weekend with the opening of the musical about love and a man-eating plant: "Little Shop of Horrors," which runs through Nov. 26. Also, at 4 p.m. today, Schuessler and actor Lou Maloof will give a special performance of A.R. Gurney's "Love Letters" to benefit the theater's scholarship fund. The performance, at Maloof's home at 29 Court St., North Chatham, will be followed by a reception with treats and wine. Tickets: \$75; 508-945-5446.

Next up at the theater will be Eric Hill's adaptation of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," about the redemption of miser Ebenezer Scrooge, running Dec. 8-31.

Shows for 2018 will be "Really Rosie," Feb. 2-25, which adds Carole King music to Maurice Sendak's story about an imaginative girl enlisting her friends in a show-business fantasy; "The Marvelous Wonderettes," March 9-April 1, which follows four women from their 1958 prom through 10 years of their lives with 20 classic hits such as "Dream Lover," "Stupid Cupid," "Son of a Preacher Man" and "It's My Party." Following "Wolf Hollow" (April 13-May 13) will be a return engagement of

SEE DRISCOLL, D2

BURY me in No. 20," he says. But that voice and octave-jumping cackle are hard to mistake for anyone but the man who hosted NBC's "Late Night" and CBS' "Late Show," a stretch that ran from 1982 until 2015.

At 70, he remains a masterful storyteller, infinitely curious and as quick with a quip as Kyrie Irving's first step to the hoop. What's gone

hole on that list at No. 20," says Letterman. "And it's me."

That's a good one. The prize is meant to recognize those who have had an "impact on American society in ways similar to" Clemens. During his tenure, Letterman invented an entirely new language for television, one steeped in irreverence, edge and sarcasm but fortified,

line and he put him on for 15 minutes and had the guy convinced that he was from the naval department and they were interested in buying all of these and they were going on a miniature submarine project, that they were going to equip them as weapons. He got to the point where he was actually trying to negotiate a price with the guy."

Harry Joseph Letterman,

had good nights, but had bad nights. But early on, his peers recognized his calling.

Tom Dreesen, the veteran comic, remembers going with Letterman for his first appearance on "The Tonight Show" in 1978.

"When I saw him walk through that curtain into that television studio, I went, 'Oh my God, he's home,'" he says.

down on the couch," says Paul Shaffer, Letterman's longtime music director and sidekick. "And he loved having a show like that. And he liked real conversation, even between me and him. He never wanted to plan what we were going to say, and it made for a real 'What you see is what you get' kind of experience."

SEE LETTERMAN, D2

# 'Pilgrim's Progress' coming to Orleans

By Keith Powers  
Contributing writer

"Ralph Vaughan Williams wanted everyone to relate to this man."

Vaughan Williams himself certainly did.

The "man" that David Chalmers talks about is Pilgrim, the protagonist in Vaughan Williams' operatic adaptation of "The Pilgrim's Progress." Chalmers directs the chorus in the massive production of the opera, being staged for two weekends at Rock Harbor's Church of the Transfiguration by the orchestra and singers of Gloriam Dei Cantores, the actors of Elements Theatre Company, and multiple soloists.

Vaughan Williams' obsession with John Bunyan's allegorical novel lasted all of his adult life. He carried a copy of the work in his pocket, into the trenches during World War I. He prepared numerous sketches of the work during his long compositional life — a radio play, an early opera that was re-worked for the piece, many musical ideas. He even substantially re-worked the "final" product after its 1951 premiere, responding to criticism of the score and of the libretto.

It was a 45-year gestation that culminated in this "morality," as Vaughan Williams chose to call it. The



Andrew Nolan, standing at left, rehearses a scene from "Pilgrim's Progress" with Peter Haig, with sword, at the Church of the Transfiguration in Orleans.

composer wrote his own libretto, with multiple borrowings from Scripture, and from the poetry of Ursula Wood.

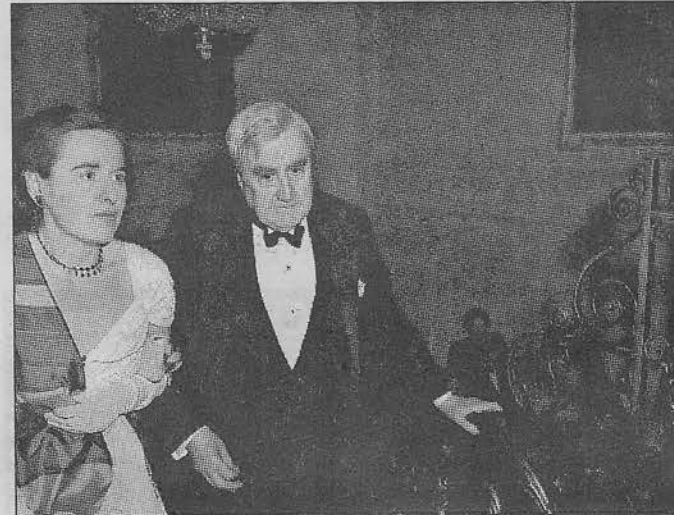
Chalmers serves as chorus master, is also artist-in-residence at the Church of the Transfiguration, and has two singing roles in the performance — there are more than four-dozen individual roles. He was part of GDC's 2005 presentation of the opera as well — "although the only thing that's similar is that we're doing the same opera," he says.

It's quite a production: a 40-person cast, a chorus of 60, a full orchestra — and almost 300 costumes. The Church of the Transfiguration will be transformed — "we're turning it 90 degrees," Chalmers says, with the

stage running the length of the main aisle, the audience seated in risers. "This way we can use all the dimensions of the church," he says.

GDC artistic director Richard K. Pugsley sings the role of Pilgrim. Danielle Dwyer directs, and James Jordan conducts the orchestra. Projections that accompany the narrative were designed by Katy Tucker, and additional vocal soloists include bass-baritone Andrew Nolan, soprano Martha Guth and tenor Aaron Sheehan.

Stagings of "The Pilgrim's Progress" are rare: GDC's 2005 production was the New England premiere, and perhaps the last complete presentation of the work in the country. This performance is the featured artistic event in an international



British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams is shown on April 26, 1951, arriving at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden in London for the first performance of his opera "The Pilgrim's Progress." [ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE]

symposium commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation — and approximately the 500th anniversary of Bunyan's allegorical novel.

"I think this work is relatable to any period in time," Chalmers says, "but it's not necessarily pertinent to this particular time. Vaughan Williams did want to create the story of Everyman. He spent 45 years toying with scenes, with the text, with how to portray different parts of the story."

"There's actually five choruses in the piece, and they are very different. I would say we've been working on this close to a year and a half, between learning the music to a fare-thee-well, and starting to create characters.

## In Concert

**What:** Ralph Vaughan Williams' "The Pilgrim's Progress"

**Performed by:** Gloriam Dei Cantores with Elements Theatre Company

**When:** 7:30 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Nov. 3-4.

**Where:** Church of the Transfiguration, Rock Harbor, Orleans

**Tickets:** \$40-\$75

**Reservations:** [www.pilgrimsprogress2017.org](http://www.pilgrimsprogress2017.org) or 508-240-2400.

"The chorus are very much characters in the story. We've spent lots of times making personal backstories for each of the scenes. I think you are seeing a vivid slice of life, a slice of reality."