

**Six Studies in English Folk-Song**  
Ralph Vaughan Williams/arr. Paul Droste  
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Pat Stuckemeyer

I have performed various concerti all over the world, but nothing stays in my mind more clearly than the first solo piece my private lesson teacher had me learn. To me, this was the greatest part about playing the euphonium. I can remember every facet of that piece. The runs that I could never seem to get right, the notes that seemed astronomically high at the time, and trying to be just a little “more musical” as my lesson teacher would say. The pieces were geared toward me developing my musical identity, which is one that I am still working toward today. We have all been there. We all have students there. Why is it that we seem to forget about the pieces that got us where we are?

How is it as teachers that we go about choosing this formative repertoire? Is there anyway that we could possibly find the concept that we wanted to teach, and then find the solo that teaches that concept? How can we adequately streamline our educational objective with these solos? Could we possibly use these solos in a more productive way as to develop extra-musical behavior? I believe that the answer is yes, we can achieve these ideas.

When I released *Stepping Stones for Euphonium, Vol. 1*, I had one goal in mind: to help younger musicians with a quality recording of these

pieces. The whole idea came to me one day while I was teaching. I had a student who was performing the *Introduction and Dance* by J.E. Barat, which is a standard piece of repertoire for any euphonium or tuba player. Thinking that a recording could be helpful, I ventured over to my collection to find that I didn't have one. Hmm... Well, it got me thinking that someone should put these pieces into a cohesive unit. I thought about this project on and off for about three months. I weighed the options and started to come up with a list of repertoire. It was wonderful sifting through all of my old pieces, much like reconnecting with an old friend.

When was the last time that you heard of a "big-name" soloist commissioning a new work that could be played by a high school or middle school age musician? Myself personally, if I don't seek out new repertoire then I become stagnant as a player. This project also gave me the great opportunity to search out and find new pieces to integrate into my teaching, something that I hadn't really done up until then. Your playing can be mirrored into your teaching, as it was in mine. Everyone has a "list" that they teach from. We all do it. I find that since we all use our "list", that there is a definite shortage of new formative repertoire today. I was teaching the "list" of pieces very simply put. I began to shove my students into a predetermined "Pat Stuckemeyer" mold of education, and I thought there had to be better way. Each student is unique, so surely I could mold a program to fit his or her individual

needs, right? Surely I could use these pieces in conjunction with new ones. Surely someone out there is writing new things for the euphonium and tuba, right? Yes, there are pieces out there, but you have to go looking for them.

In this series of articles, which we have titled *Stepping Stones to Success*, myself along with other contributors will introduce you to one piece in every volume. It might be an old favorite, but if it is new to you then hopefully there will be something discovered that then can be brought to your students. I hope that you will rediscover (or discover) each of these pieces much like I did – appreciate them for what they have to offer, cherish them for the music that you remember making with them, and then pass that along to your students.

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**Background**

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958) was one of the most prolific composers of English folk music; the *Six Studies in English Folk Song* is at the forefront of understanding this style of music. These six pieces were written for cellist May Mukle in 1926. Vaughan Williams states that these studies are to be “treated with love,” and so they are; each song is tastefully and skillfully matted and framed to reveal the beauty of the folk song. The real challenge of these works is bringing the euphonium and piano together to form one cohesive sound so that you hear the beautiful folk song, and not simply a soloist with accompaniment. While virtually every instrument has performed these pieces, Paul Droste did this arrangement. The parts have optional 8va sections that were taken by the performer, but are not necessary for performance.<sup>1</sup>

**Headlines for the Teacher**

One of the most difficult things to do on a brass instrument is a controlled legato. *Six Studies in English Folk Song* is a great example of teaching this controlled legato, and for a younger player this should be a sufficient piece for this learned concept. When preparing this piece with your students, make sure that they know the history of the piece. As their instructor it is in your best interest to familiarize yourself with

another recording of this piece, since it was not originally written for the euphonium or tuba.

When I prepare this work with a student I often have them play long passages without the horn, and simply blow the phrase using only air. This will help to smooth out the “bumps” in the sound, and possibly help them with their legato passages. Controlled legato passages can usually be helped along by simply getting the student to put a little more air into the instrument. With a student I will often reference a cello recording, or even possibly a cello edition of the piece to help with interpretation. I use the concept of an up-bow and down-bow to see where the weight of the line needs to be. Imagining bringing the bow across the strings helps me visualize where I need to “take” the phrase. Interpreting this concept is essential to knowing not only where the musical line is going, but also where it came from.

### **Pedagogical Considerations for Performance**

The biggest consideration for most teachers is range. Whether or not the student can play this piece based on its range is a viable concern. With this piece, there is a little bit of help for you. Included are many optional 8va or 8vb sections, which are to be taken at the discretion of the performer (or teacher). If the performer is not going to take these optional sections, then the range would be Bb-2 to Bb-4. If the optional sections are taken, then the range is increased to Bb-1 to C-5, which makes over three octaves that are needed for performance.

For most students who will be performing this piece for use at a state festival or contest, you would not be required to perform the entire piece. Taking the OMEA (Ohio) state contest listing as an example, movements 1, 2 & 6 are required. Check with your state to see if there are any restrictions to the performance of the piece.

### Guided Practice

#### I. Lovely on the Water (The Springtime of the Year)

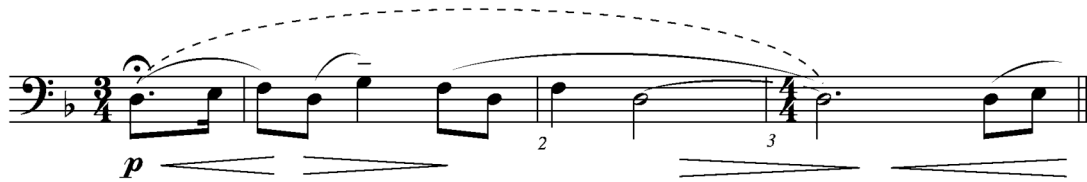
Though this movement is marked *adagio*, it is much better to think of it in terms of a song, or a *ballad*. Legato is the headline for practice on this movement. The opening two bars can be treated much like a cadenza with some nice added rubato until the piano picks up the tempo in m. 2. As with most of these movements, the soloist and accompanist should find themselves in a conversational-style of playing much like a duet instead of one playing the role of a soloist and one playing the role of accompanist. The arranger has the opening marked like this:

(Fig. 1.1)



When performing this opening section, it is important to make as much music right from the onset of the phrase, so I teach this section to be played as such:

(Fig. 1.2)



The various phrases in this movement will give a younger student some difficulty especially with the ornamentation and executing this without sounding forced. Have them practice these sections without the ornamentation before adding it in. The last two lines of this movement are without accompaniment and can often come off as under-prepared simply because the soloist isn't shaping the line like they could. Take careful consideration to these last ten measures, and allow the lines to lead you musically.

## II. Spurn Point

This movement begins with a piano statement until the soloist enters in the third bar. I find that this first note should be held slightly longer to stabilize both performers into one cohesive unit. Much like the first movement, legato is once again a headline for practice and it should be a little easier to execute with this movement. Tempo is marked by *andante sostenuto*, but again I like to give it a clearer marker. I delineated this movement as an *Irish Tune*. Giving the student a marker such as this will help them cultivate their own style and possibly make it easier for them to pull a little more "music" out of the page.

The first phrase needs to be executed with care, and a little push and pull from the soloist is expected. Here is how the arranger has the part notated:

(Fig. 2.1)



When I perform this phrase, I feel the line as a series of up and down bowing marks to use as a reference point for the phrase. The line should slow slightly throughout with each long note getting progressively longer, and in preparation for the piano feature in m. 12, the soloist should pick the tempo back up slightly. I also rephrase to make more music shape and account for the musical line during performance. This is demonstrated here:

(Fig. 2.2)



Although the soloist is still holding through the moving piano part, take care not to simply hold a stagnant note – use this a great opportunity to make music on a long note. The optional 8va section at the end is wonderful, but only if the performer can execute a high-Bb

that does not sound strained because the last note should fade away to nothing.

### III. Van Dieman's Land

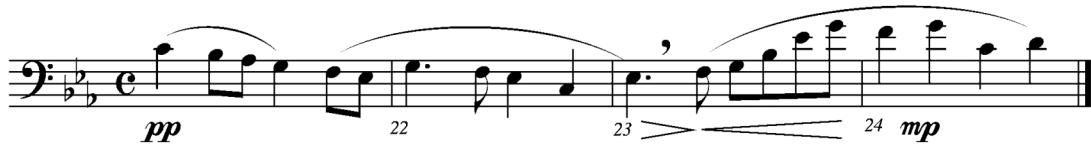
I believe that this movement is both the most challenging and most rewarding for the performer. The opening three bars should be free and at the performer's discretion. The pick-up into m. 4 should be in tempo, and once again legato should be the focus in this piece. The marking is *larghetto* for this movement, but as with the others I like to refer to this as a *ballad*. If you consider each phrase a sentence of a song, then simply put the sentences together for the entire piece. While the majority of this movement is slurred, put extra emphasis on the notes that are marked with a legato tongue. The arranger has chosen to phrase m. 22 and m. 23 as such:

(Fig. 3.1)



It seems to me that the ascending pattern in ms. 23 should lead into the next bar, and have a slight taper to the first note before the crescendo as viewed here:

(Fig. 3.2)

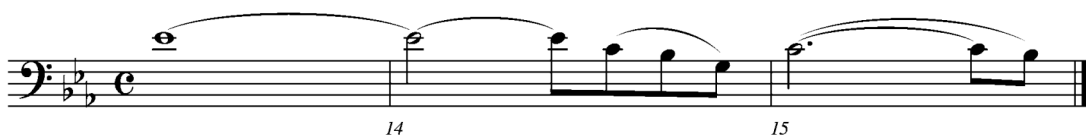


The slight taper and hairpin dynamics add so much musically. Teaching this concept can be quite difficult, so have the student practice this on a long note so that they can build confidence and control before putting this into practice.

#### IV. She Borrowed Some of Her Mother's Gold

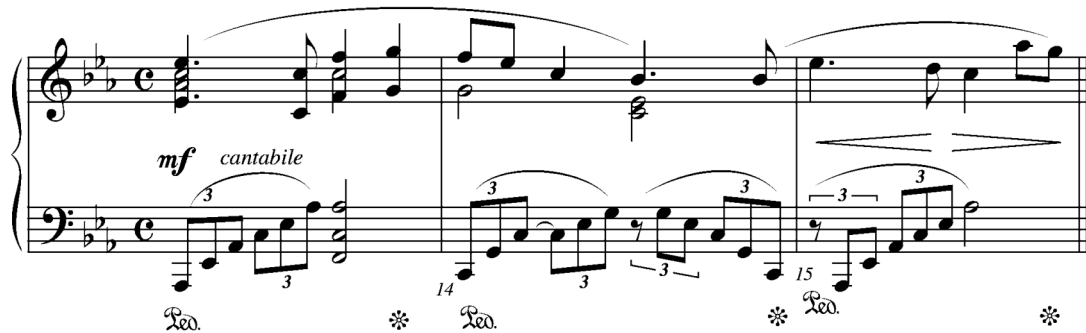
Like the previous three movements, the fourth installment brings more lyrical playing to the forefront. While this movement is marked *lento*, I continue on with a different name and aptly named this a *carol*. When recording this movement, I found that the lyrical simplicity was perhaps the hardest part of the piece. Knowledge of the piano score is also extremely important in this movement, as is evident in the next example. While the solo part remains quite calm and lyrical, much care has to be taken into consideration when simply sitting on these various long notes. Take for example ms. 13. Here is what is written in the solo part:

(Fig. 4.1)



A nice calm Eb, but unknown to the soloist here is what's happening in the piano score during this phrase:

(Fig. 4.2)



With the piano part moving from Ab-major to C-minor in ms. 14, the performer will have to alter the pitch of the long note halfway through like this:

(Fig. 4.3)



The last five measures of this movement are perhaps the most difficult to get to sound musical, or unstrained. Begin to slow at m. 21, and instead of getting softer in m. 23, use the natural crescendo to sail up to the high Bb. Once you arrive on that note, let it settle and then slowly back away the volume.

## V. The Lady and the Dragon





To me, thinking of a weighted down-bow in various places will allow the musical phrase to have life and buoyancy resulting in a smoother transition between breaths. Take care not to have a noisy breath when the arranger has given them to you, and be certain to always taper into the breaths as indicated.

#### VI. As I Walked Over London Bridge

The final movement can sound a bit obtuse if you allow it to. The first five movements of this piece offer extreme lyricism, so while this movement is lively and separated the movement still needs to have a lyrical quality to it.

Performance problems arise in this movement from the beginning. When practicing this movement make sure that rhythm is your headline, and keep true to it. Careful dissection of the piano score will help the performer during the triplet section, because the writing underneath them is still the duple melody. The performer has the option to play a pedal-Bb at the end, but only do so if you can attain this with a light attack, since the arranger has marked it *ppp*.

#### **Musical Gains Through Performance**

The *Six Studies in English Folk Song* is a great piece for studying legato phrasing, and also as a vehicle for the student to start making

music that is not on the page. The hardest part about this piece is that so much of what you do is not “on the page”, this is a great opportunity for the student to get to bring his or her ideas to the table in performance.

After studying this piece your student should have a stronger grasp on elongated musical phrases and also lighter-touch legato, which can be a big problem for most formative students. Since most of these movements are softer in dynamic, controlled playing will also be addressed and should progress through continued study.

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<sup>i</sup> Stuckemeyer, Pat. *Stepping Stones for Euphonium, Vol. 1*. CD-recording. Tempe, AZ: Potenza Music, 2006.

Fig. 1.1: Vaughan Williams, Ralph. *Six Studies in English Folk Song, mvt. I*. Arr. Paul Droste. Galaxy Music Co., 1986.

Fig. 1.2: Ibid. Pat Stuckemeyer, ed.

Fig. 2.1: Vaughan Williams, Ralph. *Six Studies in English Folk Song, mvt. II*. Arr. Paul Droste. Galaxy Music Co., 1986.

Fig. 2.2: Ibid. Pat Stuckemeyer, ed.

Fig. 3.1: Vaughan Williams, Ralph. *Six Studies in English Folk Song, mvt. III*. Arr. Paul Droste. Galaxy Music Co., 1986.

Fig. 3.2: Ibid. Pat Stuckemeyer, ed.

Fig. 4.1: Vaughan Williams, Ralph. *Six Studies in English Folk Song, mvt. IV*. Arr. Paul Droste. Galaxy Music Co., 1986.

Fig. 4.2: Ibid.

Fig. 4.3: Ibid. Pat Stuckemeyer, ed.

Fig. 5.1: Vaughan Williams, Ralph. *Six Studies in English Folk Song, mvt. V*. Arr. Paul Droste. Galaxy Music Co., 1986.

Fig. 5.2: Ibid. Pat Stuckemeyer, ed.