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Celebrating Ralph Vaughan Williams [1]

Written by **Tim Worstall** [2] | Sunday 17 February 2008

Reading this Telegraph piece [3] about why we should all be celebrating Ralph Vaughan Williams and the 50th anniversary of his death I was thinking, yes, why not?

> *He cycled all over Surrey to rehearse village choirs for his beloved Leith Hill Festival, where all manner of people - very few of them rich or educated - came together to sing the great choral masterpieces.*

One of my sisters has been doing similar work for decades with the good people of Dorset: the other sings in such things as the Bach Choir, an uncle trained generations of midlanders in the vocal arts. Quite, why shouldn't there be a national celebration of the life and work of the man who gave us such favourites as *The Lark Ascending*? Issuing a set of postage stamps seems a pretty good idea, the Post Office does after all make a profit on such things.

> *In 2008, the Philharmonia, among other orchestras, is featuring Vaughan Williams's orchestral music - and not just in London. Richard Hickox, a conductor with a fine record of promoting British music here and abroad is conducting The Pilgrim's Progress both in London and Sydney.*

Sounds wonderful, doesn't it? Then my genial agreement with the writer's ideas turned a little sour:

> *But there is no extra funding from the Government - and it takes money to enable the great man's music to be properly rehearsed and performed.*

Ah, it's all in fact a plea that the State should pick your and my pockets in order to pay for what someone else desires. In fact, the writer is [4] :

> *Hilary Davan Wetton is one of Britain's most versatile and dynamic conductors. He is Musical Director of two major choirs (the City of London Choir and the Guildford Choral Society), the Milton Keynes City Orchestra, and has made a number of acclaimed recordings. He appears frequently as a guest conductor with choirs and orchestras both in Britain and overseas, and performs regularly on Radio 3. He has a real commitment to young people, both through work with youth orchestras and audience building.*

Actually, it's worse than that. The writer is insisting that our pockets be picked so that he can be paid to do

as he desires.

I've no doubt that both of my sisters will sing some Ralph Vaughan Williams this year and that my uncle would have if he were still with us. But none of them have ever had the effrontery to ask that you should pay for their pleasures.

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