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## Introduction to the Edition

Randall Thompson (1899–1984), referred to as “The Dean of American Choral Composers” during his lifetime, is best known as a composer of choral works. These include *Alleluia*, *Frostiana*, *Glory to God in the Highest*, *Odes of Horace*, *Requiem*, *Tarantella*, *The Best of Rooms*, *The Last Words of David*, *The Passion According to Saint Luke*, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, and *The Testament of Freedom*, among many others. It is sometimes overlooked, however, that he also wrote important chamber music and three symphonies. His earliest orchestral works were championed by Howard Hanson and the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, and by 1941 his Second Symphony (1930–31) had been performed numerous times in the United States and Europe by a bevy of famous conductors including John Barbirolli, Leonard Bernstein, Serge Koussevitzky, Charles Munch, Eugene Ormandy, Fritz Reiner, Rudolph Ringwall, Bruno Walter, and others. His chamber music has also been played by renowned ensembles.

As an undergraduate at Harvard University, Thompson frequently attended chamber music concerts given gratis by guest performers, and he wrote a septette and a few miscellaneous chamber works that were performed by members of the Harvard Musical Club. His first significant foray into composing chamber music came while he was a student at the American Academy in Rome, having been awarded the first Damrosch Fellowship in 1922. While in Rome for three years, he was introduced to a plethora of repertoire at Academy concerts, Augusteo Orchestra concerts, the International Society for Contemporary Music, and other festivals he visited throughout Europe. He not only heard the latest works offered by European composers, but also was able to meet and speak with the composers themselves. Most influential was Gian Francesco Malipiero, whose works for string quartet—*Rispetti e strambotti* (1920) and *Stornelli e ballate* (1923)—were two “anti-romantic” works he heard performed. Malipiero later mentored him, offering important suggestions concerning his Second Symphony before its first performance in Rochester, New York in 1932. Alfredo Casella was another influence, as were famous chamber players including violist Lionel Tertis and members of the Pro Arte Quartet engaged by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge for a pair of May 1924 chamber music concerts at the Academy.

During his first year in Rome, shared with fellow composers Howard Hanson and Leo Sowerby, Thompson wrote only a Piano Sonata in C minor (RT 28), but in his second year he buckled down, becoming more productive and turning his hand to two instrumental works, both based on chapters from Kenneth Grahame’s delightful 1908 children’s story *The Wind in the Willows*.<sup>1</sup> The first, a string quartet (RT 29) titled after Grahame’s book, was written between February 20 and March 10, 1924 and premiered in Rome by the Quartetto Veneziano on March 15, 1925. The second was an orchestral work titled *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* (RT 30) sketched between April 24 and May 1, 1924, and completed by May 15<sup>th</sup>. It was premiered in Rome on May 27, 1924 with Thompson conducting Rome’s Augusteo Orchestra.<sup>2</sup>

Grahame’s episodic story is based on four anthropomorphized animals: Mole, Rat, Badger, and Toad, who undergo various trials and tribulations. Most likely, Thompson first encountered Grahame’s story when it was read to him during childhood. He was nine years old when it was published on June 15, 1908, but he was 22 when, for the first time, he obliquely referenced it in an August 14, 1921 letter to his mother.<sup>3</sup> “I’m like ‘Toad,’ ” he wrote. “I want a sailboat big enough to cruise in. This must be ‘the sins of the fathers!’ ” The story, fit for “children of all ages,” is divided into 12 chapters, and in his string quartet Thompson references three of them, but not in Grahame’s order. The quartet begins with Chapter 1 “River Bank,” skips to Chapter 6 “Toad, esq.,” and concludes with Chapter 3 “The Wild Wood.” *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*, on the other hand, is based solely on Chapter 7, which bears the same title.

In notes for a December 18, 1927 Boston Public Library performance of *The Wind in the Willows* by the Musical Art Quartet, Thompson contributed the following brief descriptive analysis.

The first movement in A major, is called “River Bank” and is intended to represent the home of our protagonists, Rat and Mole, who led such a peaceful middle-class English life in their home under the water. The River

1. RT numbers are those established by Carl B. and Elizabeth K. Schmidt in *The Music of Randall Thompson (1899–1984): A Documented Catalogue* (St. Louis, MO: E. C. Schirmer Music Company, 2014).

2. Luigi Enrico Ferro, Oscar Crepax, Vittorio Fael, and Edoardo Guarnieri.

3. Letter at Houghton Library, Harvard University (\*85M-70 Box 39, Folder 2 Thompson, Randall - letters to his parents).

was their God and its banks of reeds and willows whispered and made music for them. It is that music, rather than any episode, which the first movement is meant to realize.

The second movement, “Mr. Toad,” in C major, is a brief character sketch of that blustering and exuberant faddist, that florid and expansive country squire—and irrepressible poetizer.

In the third movement, “The Wild Wood,” there is perhaps a more literally programmatic intent. Moley had often looked toward that tall distant forest and longed to go there. And Ratty had warned him of its peril. But on one occasion in Winter, Ratty fell asleep over his poetry and Moley stole out of the house, ran across the fields, entered the forest and, before he knew it, was hopelessly lost. It was the Terror of the Wild Wood. . . . But his good friend the Rat roused from his sleep, comes to his rescue. They call to each other and finally meet. It is snowing but they go to a warm shelter underground, where the exhausted Moley sinks into a profound slumber and dreams of his home by the river—summer, the reeds, the willows.<sup>4</sup>

When Thompson wrote this quartet, he was not yet as thoroughly acquainted with the standard repertoire of quartets by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven as he would be in the years following his return to the United States. The quartet, therefore, reflects more the progressive trends that he heard in the works of Malipiero rather than the influences of Beethoven visible in his later String Quartet No. 1 in D minor (RT 60, 1938–41), which was commissioned by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, or his String Quartet No. 2 in G major (RT 96, 1967) commissioned by the Harvard Musical Association. Both were composed after he had thoroughly studied Beethoven’s quartets and begun teaching an analysis course devoted to them at the University of California in the late 1930s.

*The Wind in the Willows* quartet enjoyed a certain popularity between 1927 and 1941. During that period performances were given by the following quartets: Helen Teschner Tas, Musical Art, Durrell, Stringart, Boston, Coolidge, Pro Arte, and Stuyvesant.<sup>5</sup> After that it fell into obscurity no doubt because the work remained unpublished, the extant parts were inaccessible for loan, and Thompson had written a new quartet.

A critic who heard the December 18, 1927 Boston Public Library performance by the Musical Art Quartet wrote:

Mr. Thompson, discoursing upon the mystery of the woods, has recourse to the weirdness of “modern” harmony, doubly weird in its rather straightforward and conventional setting. From weirdness to agitation and back again, is the course of this movement. Mr. Thompson has written a quartet which has all the earmarks of a youthful work, but which gives more than usual promise. It is short, not as definitely programmatic as one might imagine when its fantastic literary inspiration is taken into consideration; it does not flirt too much with “modern” effects, it is well made, it is in spots rather naïve; again, it is genuinely musical, it is more “hearable” than many a more ambitious work by older hands.<sup>6</sup>

Its most prestigious performance came during Harvard’s Tercentenary celebration on September 15, 1936 in the Sanders Theatre at a concert under Mrs. Coolidge’s sponsorship. The performance by the Boston String Quartet (Harrison Keller [vn. 1], Paul Fedorovsky [vn. 2], Georges Fourel [vla.], and Alfred Zighera [vc.]) was broadcast over the radio.

With the publication of this edition, all four of his works written for string quartet are now available. In 2016 the present editors, through E. C. Schirmer Music Company, published Thompson’s *Wedding Music*, a suite of eight pieces for string quartet written for the wedding of his son Randall Thompson, Jr. to Delia M. C. Hayes in Rome (RT 100, 1971).<sup>7</sup> Now for the first time, one of the instrumental works written in Rome during his Academy tenure is finally available in score and parts for study and performance. Previously only his five Roman *Odes of Horace* for chorus of 1924–25—but not published until 1932—and Suite for Piano (RT 31, 1924–25, © 1984)<sup>8</sup> permitted us a glimpse of Thompson’s first flourishing as a young composer studying abroad.

Thompson’s contribution to chamber music was publicly acknowledged as early as October 30, 1941 when his String Quartet No. 1 was premiered in Coolidge Auditorium at the Library of Congress. At the concert’s conclusion, Mrs. Coolidge presented medals “For Eminent Services to Chamber Music” to all three composers whose works had

4. Program at Houghton Library, Harvard University (\*85M-70 Box 38, Folder 5 Disbound Scrapbook from 1929).

5. For details about performances by these quartets see Schmidt and Schmidt, *The Music of Randall Thompson*, 71–73.

6. A[lfred] H. M[eyer], “Native Wood-Notes: The Musical Art Quartet Plays to Overflowing Hall ‘The Wind in the Willows’ for Novelty from Randall Thompson—Orthodox Pieces Besides,” *Boston Evening Transcript*, December 19, 1927.

7. Catalog no. 263.

8. A work written with sections alternately by Leopold Mannes.

been performed by the Coolidge Quartet that day: Benjamin Britten for String Quartet No. 1 in D major, Alexander Tansman for Piano Sonata No. 4, and Randall Thompson.

Ironically, Thompson's most frequently performed chamber work is not one of his works for string quartet. Rather, it is his *Suite for Oboe, Clarinet, and Viola*, written in the two weeks between February 15 and 26, 1940, a few months before he composed *Alleluia* for the opening of the Berkshire Music Center in Lenox, Massachusetts. Commissioned by the League of Composers and dedicated to his close friend Bertrand Bronson (then Professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley), it has seen many more performances than either numbered string quartet. This *Suite* was one of Thompson's favorite pieces, and he encouraged its performance whenever he could during guest-conducting appearances across the country.

*The Wind in the Willows*, his most dissonant and rhythmically complex chamber music score, travels a path that the composer abandoned soon after returning to the United States in fall 1925.<sup>9</sup> A reviewer, who heard it played in 1939, along with Mozart's Quartet in B-flat major, K. 458 and Debussy's Quartet in G minor, wrote:

"THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS," the only string quartet of Randall Thompson, young New York-born composer, was the "modern" of the evening. Its three highly impressionistic subjects supposedly represent the "River Bank," "Toad, Esquire," and the "Wildwood." There is a certain indefinable, atmospheric attractiveness in "The Wind in the Willows," which, however, appears to fall just short of accomplishing its purpose. It leaves one peculiarly unsatisfied. But the style, as well as the spirit of the work, was successfully penetrated by the performance of the Pro Arte Quartet.<sup>10</sup>

What the 1927 reviewer called "the weirdness of 'modern' harmony" surely references the astringent sounds employed, which at times are both dissonant and abrasive. Although the movements are tonal on the large scale—Mov. I A major, Movs. II and III C major—on a measure to measure level considerably more dissonance exists than is found in his two numbered quartets. For example, Thompson often employs the simultaneous stacking of notes in more than one tonality: E-flat major and G minor (m. 179), D major and D-flat major (m. 263), or C major and A-flat major (m. 274). There are passages involving parallel fifths (mm. 32, 35, and 100), parallel seventh chords (m. 269), melodic motion between parts in major seconds (m. 15), and numerous cross relations, some of which occur simultaneously. Rhythmically the first movement utilizes undulating 9/8 or 6/8 meters often over 3/4 in one or more parts to depict the flow of the river, but there are passages in 2/8 and 3/8 with note groupings across bar lines. Moreover, asymmetrical groupings such as 5 eighth notes in a 3/4 measure also occur. Dynamics change frequently, bowing indications are numerous, and the tempo often varies. The quartet is quasi programmatic and written in three rather than the more typical four movement structure found in both of his numbered quartets.

With his early *The Wind in the Willows* quartet finally available, we hope that it will once again enjoy performances by contemporary string quartets. Its first modern performance from the present edition was given at the Bon Air Presbyterian Church in Richmond, Virginia on August 27, 2017 by the Richmond Chamber Players: Susy Yim (vn. 1), Catharine Cary (vn. 2), Stephen Schmidt (vla.), and Ryan Lannan (vc.).

### Source of the Edition

Regrettably, while the copyist's parts and Thompson's manuscript score were in the hands of one of the quartets that played it in the later 1930s, the manuscript score became lost and remains so. Moreover, whatever parts were used when the quartet was premiered in Rome disappeared long ago. What does remain is listed below.

1. Sketches in score in two oblong notebooks are included in Thompson's *Nachlass* at Harvard University, Houghton Library (bMS Mus 173 Box 1 (15) and (16)). The latter, which contains Mov. 2, was badly water damaged when Thompson mistakenly left it out in the rain one day after working on his sketch. Both manuscripts contain numerous alterations in pencil or ink and represent the work in its earliest state.

9. His *Suite for Piano* (RT 31) and *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* also contain some of his more dissonant writing. The latter was rejected for possible performance by Walter Damrosch who wrote on March 6, 1925: "I like your work very much. It should sound beautifully and I shall perform it next November at one of the first concerts of the Symphony Society." After trying it with his orchestra sometime later, however, he had a change of heart as he wrote on December 13<sup>th</sup>: "Sometime ago, I began looking through your work more carefully with the view of its production at one of our concerts, and became a good deal perturbed at its persistent, and to me, seemingly needless succession of dissonances." Damrosch then declined to perform it. Letters at Houghton Library, Harvard University (\*85M-70 Box 42.4, Folder Damrosch, Walter).

10. C. D. H., "Pro Arte Quartet is Heard in Second of Recitals Here," *Baltimore Sun*, March 22, 1939, 5.

2. A set of manuscript parts in a copyist's hand is at the Library of Congress (ML29d.T47 Case) and is the primary source for our edition.
3. Ozalid copies of these parts are also held at the Library of Congress (ML29e.T47 Case) and at the Houghton Library (\*85M-70 Box 17.4). Neither set contributes useful information not contained in item 2 above.

### Editorial Procedures

The extant parts, unfortunately, are rife with contradictions including missing indications of triplets and inconsistencies in phrasing, articulations (wedges vs staccato dots), dynamics, bowings, etc. In a letter to a gentleman who inquired about the meaning of articulation marks in his *The Peaceable Kingdom* Thompson responded:

The wedge over or under notes is used to indicate staccato in *forte* passages; the dots are reserved for *piano* staccato. The v or ^ (identical in meaning) mean sfz and staccato (unless the note is long; in which case it means sfz only).

To have indicated all of the changes required to rectify these inconsistencies using square brackets, italics, or a lengthy series of critical notes would have served no logical purpose and would have needlessly cluttered the edition for potential performers. The editors have, therefore, used their best judgment to make the parts and the score consistent between the instruments, and have not further indicated the changes.

### Uncommon Italian Nomenclature in the Edition

Thompson's score contains a few less common phrases in Italian that are translated below.

<i>Calmato</i>	Calmed
<i>Calmo, leggierrmente ondulante</i>	Calm, lightly undulating
<i>Non trascinare</i>	Don't drag
<i>Sempre sentita</i>	Always heard
<i>Sentito</i>	Heard
<i>Sereno, limpido</i>	Serenely, clearly
<i>Simile</i>	Similarly
<i>Soave</i>	Suavely
<i>Stanco poco, meno mosso</i>	A little tired, less energetic
<i>Un po' flebile</i>	A bit weak

### Acknowledgments

Special thanks are due to Alexandra Franciscus and Susannah Elliott for their assistance obtaining permission from Randall Thompson's living heirs to publish this edition. We continue to be indebted to Mark Lawson, President of ECS Publishing Group, for his interest in revitalizing Thompson's music through new publications and performances. In addition, we thank the staffs of the Houghton Library at Harvard University and the Music Division of the Library of Congress for their generous assistance with our research on Thompson and *The Wind in the Willows* in particular. We also thank Professors Anthony Cummings and Linda L. Carroll for assistance with the Italian terms listed above and Stephen Schmidt, who generously reviewed the edition from the perspective of a string player and whose string quartet played the first performance from this edition. Finally, we are enormously grateful to Andrew Hamilton of Hamilton Engraving for his expert and meticulous work generating the score and parts of this edition and to Stanley M. Hoffman, Chief Editor at E. C. Schirmer, for his customary excellent work preparing the edition for publication.

—Carl B. and Elizabeth K. Schmidt  
Baltimore, Maryland  
April 2017

# The Wind in the Willows

## I. River-bank Allegretto Moderato

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

III corda

*p dolce* *mf*

*p* *simile*  
*calmo, leggermente ondulante*

*p* *simile*  
*calmo, leggermente ondulante*

*p* *simile*  
*calmo, leggermente ondulante*

6

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*mf* *p* *pp* *p*

*poco cresc.* *mf* *pp* *simile*

*poco cresc.* *mf* *pp* *simile*

*poco cresc.* *mf* *pp* *simile*

*In tempo ma accel.*

11

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*mf* *f* *mf* *pp*

*mf* *f* *mf* *p* *f* *pp*

*mf* *f* *mf* *pizz.* *arco* *p* *f* *pp*

*mf* *f* *mf* *pizz.* *arco* *p* *f* *pp*

**B** Piu mosso *rall.* Tempo I

16

Vln. I *f f sf f p con calma*

Vln. II *f f sf f p calmo simile*

Vla. *f f sf f p calmo simile*

Vc. *f p molto espress.*

*pizz.*

*arco*

21

Vln. I *mf p p*

Vln. II *mf p f*

Vla. *mf p f*

Vc. *mf p f*

25

**C**

Vln. I *f p*

Vln. II *p f p espress.*

Vla. *p f p*

Vc. *p molto espress.*

29 *sul IV* **D** solo III corda

Vln. I *mp espressivo* *mf* *mf cantabile*

Vln. II *mp* *mf cantabile*

Vla. *mp* *mf*

Vc. *mp* *mf*

33

Vln. I *f* *p*

Vln. II *f* *p*

Vla. *f* solo *espress. mf*

Vc. *f* *p*

37

Vln. I *p* *mf cresc.*

Vln. II *mf cresc.*

Vla. *f cresc.*

Vc. *mf cresc.*



41

Vln. I *f*

Vln. II *f* IV corda

Vla. *ff* III corda *sentito*

Vc. *f*

*poco rall.* **E** *a tempo*

45

Vln. I *p* *mp* *cantabile* 3

Vln. II *sf* *f* *molto espress.*

Vla. *pp*

Vc. *pp*

48

Vln. I *mf* *cresc.* *f*

Vln. II *sf* III corda *cresc.* 3 *f*

Vla. *f* 3 5 *cresc.* *f*

Vc. *f* *cresc.* *f*

**F**

53

Vln. I *mf* *con espress.*

Vln. II *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vc. *f* *solo* *molto espress.*

3

55

Vln. I *f*

Vln. II *ff*

Vla. *ff*

Vc. *ff*

*dim.*

*f* *un poco agitato cresc.*

*f* *un poco agitato cresc.*

*f* *un poco agitato cresc.*

*f* *un poco agitato cresc.*

3

**Piu mosso**

58

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla. IV corda

Vc.

3

62 *8va* loco

Vln. I *ff* 3

Vln. II *ff* *largamente*

Vla. *ff* *largamente*

Vc. *ff*

66 *rall.* *in tempo*

Vln. I *f* *ff* *sf* 3

Vln. II *ff* *sf* 3

Vla. *ff* *sf* *f*

Vc. *sf* *portato*

IV corda

70 *agitato, non trascinare*

Vln. I *ff* *mp*

Vln. II *ff* *p* *pizz.* *p*

Vla. *ff* *p*

Vc. *ff* *pizz.* *p* *p*

*cresc.*

G IV corda