The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten

Edited by Mervyn Cooke

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BENJAMIN BRITTEN

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Contributors

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Arved Ashby is Assistant Professor of Musicology at the Ohio State University. He completed his Ph.D. at Yale University, and has since pursued interests ranging from Mahler to Robert Ashley, with particular emphasis on modernist aesthetics and the relationship between Schoenberg and Berg. He is currently preparing a study of the relations between concert music and film, writing a book on Berg's early twelve-tone aesthetic and editing a re-evaluation of modernist music.

Mervyn Cooke was Director of Music at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, before his appointment as Lecturer in Music at the University of Nottingham in 1993. His publications include studies of Britten's *Billy Budd* and *War Requiem* (Cambridge University Press, 1993 and 1996), a monograph on *Britten and the Far East* (The Boydell Press, 1998) and two volumes on jazz (Thames & Hudson, 1997 and 1998). He is co-editor (with Donald Mitchell and Philip Reed) of the forthcoming third volume of Britten's letters to be published by Faber & Faber. His compositions have been broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and Radio France and performed at London's South Bank, and he is also active as a pianist.

Clifford Hindley studied Classics and Philosophy at Oxford, and Theology at Cambridge. Starting with New Testament scholarship (on which he published several articles), in mid-career he moved to the Civil Service and maintained a strong interest in music as an amateur pianist and choral singer. Following retirement, he has made a study of same-sex relationships in Britten's operas, with articles appearing in *Music & Letters*, *Musical Quarterly*, *Cambridge Opera Journal* and *History Workshop Journal*; he has also published articles on Greek homosexuality.

Paul Kildea was educated at the Universities of Melbourne and Oxford, where he worked closely with Malcolm Gillies and Cyril Ehrlich. He has broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and contributed articles and reviews to various journals. He is currently editing Britten's collected writings for Oxford University Press, who are also due to publish his doctoral thesis on the social and economic history of Britten's music; future projects include a volume on *Owen Wingrave*. He has conducted performances of many Britten works, including the *War Requiem*, and in 1997 he made his Opera Australia début with Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*.

Judith LeGrove read Music at Jesus College, Cambridge, where she wrote a

dissertation on Britten's *The Burning Fiery Furnace*. She is currently Cataloguing Manager at the Britten–Pears Library, Aldeburgh, and contributes to the Aldeburgh Festival programme books, as well as assisting in the preparation of Britten's juvenilia for performance and publication.

Antonia Malloy-Chirgwin read Music at the University of Oxford and completed a Master's degree at the University of Surrey, where she researched the creation of the libretto to Britten's *Owen Wingrave*. Since then, she has worked extensively on *Gloriana*, with particular reference to the circumstances of the opera's genesis; her account of the work's critical reception was published in Paul Banks (ed.), *Britten's 'Gloriana': Essays and Sources* (The Boydell Press, 1993). Her other interests include music theatre and the history of orchestration.

Christopher Mark lectures at the University of Surrey. He graduated from the University of Southampton, where he subsequently pursued doctoral research into Britten's music under Peter Evans. A revised version of his thesis, *Early Benjamin Britten: A Study of Stylistic and Technical Evolution*, was published by Garland in 1995. He has also published articles on Tippett, Bartók and Roger Smalley, and is currently writing a book on Smalley for Harwood Academic Press's 'Contemporary Music Studies' series.

Donald Mitchell was Britten's publisher from 1965 onwards, and has long been internationally recognized as the leading authority on the work of both Britten and Mahler. His edition (with Philip Reed) of the first two volumes of Britten's letters won a Royal Philharmonic Society Award in 1992; his other studies of the composer include *Benjamin Britten: Pictures from a Life* (with John Evans; Faber & Faber, 1978), *Britten and Auden in the Thirties* (Faber & Faber, 1981) and the Cambridge Opera Handbook on *Death in Venice* (1987). Several groundbreaking articles on Britten have been reprinted as part of an anthology of his writings, *Cradles of the New* (Faber & Faber, 1995).

Philip Reed completed his doctoral dissertation on Britten's music for film, theatre and radio, and went on to become Staff Musicologist at the Britten–Pears Library; he is currently Head of Publications at English National Opera. He co-edited (with Donald Mitchell) the first two volumes of Britten's correspondence, and his many other publications include an edition of Peter Pears's travel diaries, the Festschrift *On Mahler and Britten* for Dr Mitchell's 70th birthday, and detailed source studies of *Billy Budd*, *Gloriana*, *Peter Grimes* and the *War Requiem*.

Eric Roseberry read Music at Durham University with Arthur Hutchings and A. E. F. Dickinson. He subsequently worked as a BBC producer with Hans Keller and later as a music lecturer at Sussex University with Donald Mitchell. He is now a freelance musician and writer specializing in the music of Britten and Shostakovich. His Ph.D. thesis on the latter was published in 1989, and his recent work includes an essay 'Shostakovich and his late-period recognition of Britten' in Cambridge University Press's *Shostakovich Studies* (1995), edited by David Fanning.

Philip Rupprecht is Assistant Professor of Music at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York. He read music at Selwyn College, Cambridge, and went on to receive the Ph.D. in Music Theory at Yale University

in 1993. Currently a Wolfe Fellow in the Humanities, he is writing an analytical study of Britten's works for Cambridge University Press's 'Music in the Twentieth Century' series.

Arnold Whittall is Professor Emeritus of Music Theory and Analysis at King's College, London. His many writings have given particular emphasis to opera from Wagner onwards, and to twentieth-century British music. His book *The Music of Britten and Tippett: Studies in Themes and Techniques* (Cambridge University Press) was first published in 1982, and his articles on Britten have dealt with such topics as the harmonic character of the *War Requiem*, the relationship between text, drama and music in *Billy Budd*, and the significance of certain genres (e.g. pastoral and hymnody) for the composer.

Ralph Woodward was Organ Scholar and Acting Sub-Organist at Durham Cathedral before winning an Organ Scholarship at Queens' College, Cambridge. He conducted the Queens' Chapel Choir's first two CDs, and his edition of Stanford's *Queens' Service* has been published by Stainer & Bell. He now combines freelance conducting and teaching with his duties as Assistant Organist at St Catharine's College, Cambridge; recent conducting engagements have taken him to the Battersea Opera Festival, Sunderland Empire Theatre and the Northumbrian Recorder and Viol School.

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Abbreviations

AW*BT* Arnold Whittall, *The Music of Britten and Tippett: Studies in Themes and Techniques* (Cambridge University Press, 1982; second edition 1990)

BB*AA* Benjamin Britten, *On Receiving the First Aspen Award* (London: Faber & Faber, 1964, reprinted Faber Music, 1978)

BB*PG* Paul Banks (ed.), *The Making of 'Peter Grimes'*, 1: *Facsimile of Benjamin Britten's Composition Draft*, 2: *Notes and Commentaries* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1996).

BSB John Evans, Philip Reed and Paul Wilson, *A Britten Source Book* (Aldeburgh: The Britten Estate, 1987).

CM*EB* Christopher Mark, *Early Benjamin Britten: A Study of Stylistic and Technical Evolution* (New York and London: Garland, 1995).

CP*BC* Christopher Palmer (ed.), *The Britten Companion* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984)

DH*OB* David Herbert (ed.), *The Operas of Benjamin Britten* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1979; reprinted, The Herbert Press, 1989)

DM*BA* Donald Mitchell, *Britten and Auden in the Thirties: The Year 1936* (London: Faber & Faber, 1981)

DM*CN* Donald Mitchell, *Cradles of the New: Writings on Music 1951–1991*, selected by Christopher Palmer, edited by Mervyn Cooke (London: Faber & Faber, 1995)

DM*DV* Donald Mitchell (ed.), *Benjamin Britten: Death in Venice* (Cambridge University Press, 1987)

DMHK Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller (eds.), *Benjamin Britten: A Commentary on His Works From a Group of Specialists* (London: Rockliff, 1952)

DMJE Donald Mitchell and John Evans, *Pictures from a Life: Benjamin Britten 1913–1976* (London: Faber & Faber, 1978)

DMPR Donald Mitchell and Philip Reed (eds.), *Letters from a Life: The Selected Letters and Diaries of Benjamin Britten 1913–1976*, volume 1: 1923–39; volume 2: 1939–45 (London: Faber & Faber, 1991)

EWW*B* Eric Walter White, *Benjamin Britten: His Life and Operas* (London: Faber & Faber, 1970; second edition, revised by John Evans, 1983)

HC*BB* Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992)

MC*BE* Mervyn Cooke, *Britten and the Far East*, Aldeburgh Studies in Music No. 4 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998)

MCPR Mervyn Cooke and Philip Reed, *Benjamin Britten: Billy Budd* (Cambridge University Press, 1993)

MC*WR* Mervyn Cooke, *Benjamin Britten: War Requiem* (Cambridge University Press, 1996)

MK*B* Michael Kennedy, *Britten*, Master Musicians (London: Dent, 1981; revised edition 1993)

MS*BC* Murray Schafer, *British Composers in Interview* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963)

PB*BG* Paul Banks (ed.), *Britten's 'Gloriana': Essays and Sources*, Aldeburgh Studies in Music No. 1 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1993)

PB*PG* Philip Brett (ed.), *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes* (Cambridge University Press, 1983)

PE*MB* Peter Evans, *The Music of Benjamin Britten* (London: Dent, 1979; second edition, Oxford University Press, 1990)

PH*TS* Patricia Howard (ed.), *Benjamin Britten: The Turn of the Screw* (Cambridge University Press, 1985)

PR*MB* Philip Reed (ed.), *On Mahler and Britten: Essays in Honour of Donald Mitchell on his 70th Birthday*, Aldeburgh Studies in Music No. 3 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1995)

PR*PP* Philip Reed (ed.), *The Travel Diaries of Peter Pears, 1936–1978*, Aldeburgh Studies in Music No. 2 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1995)

RD*WB* Ronald Duncan, *Working with Britten: A Personal Memoir* (Bideford: The Rebel Press, 1981)

Chronology

(Dates in parentheses refer to first performances, unless otherwise specified.)

YEAR	BIOGRAPHY AND WORKS	OTHER COMPOSERS
1913	Born, Lowestoft UK (22 November)	Schoenberg, *Gurrelieder* (23 February) Debussy, *Jeux* (15 May) Stravinsky, *Le sacre du printemps* (29 May)
1919	Begins piano lessons and starts composing	Strauss, *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (10 October) Elgar, Cello Concerto (27 October)
1923	Begins viola lessons	Sibelius, Symphony No. 6 (19 February) Walton, *Façade* (12 June) Stravinsky, *Les noces* (13 June) Milhaud, *La création du monde* (25 October)
1927	Studies composition with Frank Bridge	Berg, *Lyric Suite* (8 January) Krenek, *Jonny spielt auf* (10 February) Stravinsky, *Oedipus Rex* (30 May) Weill, *Mahagonny* (17 July)
1928	Composes *Quatre chansons françaises* between leaving South Lodge prep school and entering Gresham's School, Holt	Lambert, *The Rio Grande* (27 February) Weill, *Die Dreigroschenoper* (3 August) Schoenberg, Variations for Orchestra (2 December) Gershwin, *An American in Paris* (13 December)
1929	Composes *A Wealden Trio* and *The Birds*	Beecham's Delius Festival, London
1930	Performs his *Bagatelle* at Gresham's (1 March); composes *A Hymn to the Virgin* in school sick-bay; leaves school and takes up a scholarship at Royal College of Music (22 September)	Shostakovich, *The Nose* (12 January) Schoenberg, *Von heute auf morgen* (1 February) Berg, *Der Wein* (4 June) Stravinsky, *Symphony of Psalms* (13 December)
1931	Wins Farrar Prize at RCM (July); composes String Quartet in D and *Thy King's Birthday*	Copland, Variations for Piano (4 January) Walton, *Belshazzar's Feast* (10 October) Stravinsky, Violin Concerto (23 October)
1932	Wins Cobbett Prize with Phantasy, string quintet (22 July); *Three Two-Part Songs* (12 December)	Ravel, two Piano Concerti (5 and 14 January) Poulenc, Concerto for Two Pianos (5 September) Prokofiev, Piano Concerto No. 5 (31 October)
1933	*Sinfonietta* (31 January); wins second Farrar Prize at RCM (July); Phantasy, oboe quartet (6 August); *Three Divertimenti* (11 December); awarded ARCM (13 December) and leaves RCM	Varèse, *Ionisation* (6 March) Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2 (6 October) Shostakovich, Piano Concerto No. 1 (15 October)

1934	*A Boy Was Born* (23 February); *Simple Symphony* (6 March); attends ISCM in Florence (April); *Holiday Diary* (30 November)	Shostakovich, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (22 January) Rachmaninov, *Paganini Rhapsody* (7 November)
1935	Film scores for GPO Film Unit (from May onwards), including *The King's Stamp*, *Coal Face* and *Night Mail*; begins collaboration with W. H. Auden; *Te Deum in C* (13 November); incidental music to Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* (19 November) and Slater's *Easter 1916* (4 December)	Bartók, String Quartet No. 5 (8 April) Vaughan Williams, Symphony No. 4 (10 April) Gershwin, *Porgy and Bess* (30 September) Walton, Symphony No. 1 (6 November)
1936	Signed up by Boosey & Hawkes (January); Suite for violin and piano (6 March); *Russian Funeral* (8 March); *Two Lullabies* (19 March); attends ISCM in Barcelona (April); *Our Hunting Fathers* (25 September); *Temporal Variations* (15 December); vocal settings of Auden's poetry; film score to Rotha's *Peace of Britain* and feature film *Love from a Stranger*; incidental music to Slater's *Stay Down Miner* (10 May) and Aeschylus/MacNeice's *The Agamemnon* (1 November); arranges Rossini as *Soirées musicales*	Berg, Violin Concerto (19 April; attended by Britten) Prokofiev, *Peter and the Wolf* (2 May) Vaughan Williams, *Five Tudor Portraits* (25 September, in same programme as Britten's *Our Hunting Fathers*)
1937	*Reveille* (12 April); friendship with Peter Pears (spring); *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* (27 August); radio cantata *The Company of Heaven* (BBC, 29 September); *On This Island* (19 November); incidental music to Auden/Isherwood's *The Ascent of F6* (26 February), Slater's *Pageant of Empire* (28 February), Bridson's *King Arthur* (BBC, 23 April) and MacNeice's *Out of the Picture* (5 December)	Bartók, *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste* (21 January) Copland, *The Second Hurricane* (21 April) Berg, *Lulu* (2 June) Bliss, *Checkmate* (15 June) Shostakovich, Symphony No. 5 (21 November)
1938	Meets Copland at ISCM in London (June); radio cantata *The World of the Spirit* (BBC, 5 June); Piano Concerto (18 August); film score to *Advance Democracy*; incidental music to Slater's *Spain* (22 June), Auden/Isherwood's *On the Frontier* (14 November) and Catto's *They Walk Alone* (21 November)	Bartók, Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion (16 January) Stravinsky, *Dumbarton Oaks* (8 May) Hindemith, *Mathis der Maler* (28 May) Barber, *Adagio* (5 November)
1939	*Ballad of Heroes* (5 April); incidental music to Priestley's *Johnson over Jordan* (22 February); sails to Canada with Pears (29 April); moves to New York with Pears (27 June); music for White/Helweg's *The Sword in the Stone* (BBC, June–July); *Young Apollo* (27 August)	Harris, Symphony No. 3 (24 February) Prokofiev, *Alexander Nevsky* (17 May) Cage, *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* (9 December)
1940	*Les illuminations* (30 January); Violin Concerto (28 March); radio music to Auden's *The Dark Valley* (CBS, 2 June); *Canadian Carnival* (6 June)	Dallapiccola, *Volo di notte* (18 May) Stravinsky, Symphony in C (7 November) Schoenberg, Violin Concerto (6 December)

1941	*Introduction and Rondo alla Burlesca* (5 January); *Sinfonia da Requiem* (29 March); radio music to Lawrence/Auden/Stern's *The Rocking-Horse Winner* (6 April); operetta *Paul Bunyan* (New York, 5 May); String Quartet No. 1 (21 September); *Scottish Ballad* (28 November); *Mazurka Elegiaca* (9 December); arranges Rossini as *Matinées musicales*	Messiaen, *Quatuor pour la Fin du Temps* (15 January) Schuman, Symphony No. 3 (17 October)
1942	Koussevitzky Foundation commissions *Peter Grimes* (January); *Diversions* (16 January); sails to UK with Pears (16 March); *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* (23 September); *Hymn to St Cecilia* (22 November); *A Ceremony of Carols* (5 December); radio music includes Sayers's *The Man Born to be King* (summer) and joint US/UK documentaries	Shostakovich, Symphony No. 7 (1 March) Martin, *Le vin herbé* (26 March) Strauss, *Capriccio* (28 October)
1943	Prelude and Fugue for 18-part strings (23 June); *Rejoice in the Lamb* (21 September); *Serenade* (15 October); radio score for Sackville-West's *The Rescue* (25–6 November); first volume of folksong arrangements published	Webern, Variations for Orchestra (3 March) Copland, *Fanfare for the Common Man* (12 March) Messiaen, *Visions de l'Amen* (10 May)
1944	Visits Eichstätt POW camp and performs *The Ballad of Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard* (February); two Auden settings for *A Poet's Christmas* (BBC, 24 December)	Tippett, *A Child of Our Time* (19 March) Bartók, Concerto for Orchestra (1 December)
1945	*Festival Te Deum* (24 April); *Peter Grimes* (Sadler's Wells, 7 June); visits German concentration camps with Menuhin (July); incidental music to Duncan's *This Way to the Tomb* (11 October); String Quartet No. 2 (21 November); *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne* (22 November); film score to *The Instruments of the Orchestra* (29 November)	Prokofiev, Symphony No. 5 (13 January) Shostakovich, Symphony No. 9 (3 November) Martinů, Symphony No. 4 (30 November)
1946	Radio music for MacNeice's *The Dark Tower* (BBC, 21 January); revised version of Piano Concerto (2 July); *The Rape of Lucretia* (Glyndebourne, 12 July); incidental music to Cocteau/Duncan's *The Eagle Has Two Heads* (4 September) and Webster/Auden's *The Duchess of Malfi* (20 September); *Prelude and Fugue on a Theme of Vittoria* (21 September); *Occasional Overture* (29 September); *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* (15 October); founds English Opera Group (autumn); second volume of folksong arrangements published; begins series of Purcell realizations	Stravinsky, *Symphony in Three Movements* (24 January) Prokofiev, *War and Peace* (12 June) Copland, Symphony No. 3 (18 October)

1947	Moves to Aldeburgh, Suffolk; *Albert Herring* (Glyndebourne, 20 June); *Canticle I: My Beloved is Mine* (1 November); Christmas music for *Men of Goodwill* (BBC, 25 December); third volume of folksong arrangements published	Weill, *Street Scene* (9 January) Menotti, *The Telephone* (18 February) Schoenberg, String Trio (1 May)
1948	*A Charm of Lullabies* (3 January); *The Beggar's Opera* (24 May); *Saint Nicolas* opens first Aldeburgh Festival (5 June)	Lutoslawski, Symphony No. 1 (1 April) Henze, Symphony No. 1 (25 August)
1949	*Let's Make An Opera* (Aldeburgh, 14 June); *Spring Symphony* (9 July); *A Wedding Anthem: Amo Ergo Sum* (29 September); incidental music to Duncan's *Stratton* (31 October)	Bernstein, Symphony No. 2 (8 April) Messiaen, *Turangalîla-symphonie* (2 December) Dallapiccola, *Il prigioniero* (4 December)
1950	*Lachrymae* (20 June)	Schaeffer/Henry, *Musique concrète* (18 March)
1951	Realization of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1 May); *Five Flower Songs* (24 May); *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* (14 June); *Billy Budd* (Royal Opera, 1 December)	Gerhard, *The Duenna* (27 June) Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress* (11 September)
1952	*Canticle II: Abraham and Isaac* (21 January)	Cage, *4'33"* (29 August)
1953	Companion of Honour (1 June); *Gloriana* (Royal Opera, 8 June); *Winter Words* (8 October)	Stockhausen, *Kontra-Punkte* (26 May) Shostakovich, Symphony No. 10 (17 December)
1954	Incidental music to Roussin's *Am Stram Gram* (4 March); *The Turn of the Screw* (La Fenice, 14 September)	Stravinsky, Septet (23 January) Varèse, *Déserts* (2 December)
1955	*Canticle III: Still Falls the Rain* (28 January); contributes two songs to Duncan's *The Punch Revue* (28 September); embarks on five-month world tour with Pears (31 October)	Tippett, *The Midsummer Marriage* (27 January) Boulez, *Le marteau sans maître* (18 June)
1956	Visits Indonesia (January), Japan (February) and India (March) as part of world tour	Barraqué, *Séquence* (10 March) Nono, *Il canto sospeso* (24 October)
1957	*The Prince of the Pagodas* (Royal Ballet, 1 January); moves to The Red House, Aldeburgh (November)	Stravinsky, *Agon* (17 June) Hindemith, *Die Harmonie der Welt* (11 August)
1958	*Songs from the Chinese* (17 June); *Noye's Fludde* (Orford, 18 June); *Sechs Hölderlin-Fragmente* (14 November)	Tippett, Symphony No. 2 (5 February) Boulez, *Doubles* (16 March) Cage, Piano Concerto (15 May)
1959	*Nocturne* (30 January); *Fanfare for St Edmundsbury* (June); *Missa Brevis* (22 July)	Stockhausen, *Gruppen* (24 March) Dutilleux, Symphony No. 2 (9 December)
1960	*A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Aldeburgh, 11 June); *Cantata Academica* (1 July); friendship with Rostropovich and Shostakovich (September); *Fanfare for SS Oriana* (3 November); revised version of *Billy Budd* (BBC radio, 13 November); fourth volume of folksong arrangements published	Boulez, *Pli selon pli* (13 June) Ligeti, *Apparitions* (19 June) Messiaen, *Chronochromie* (16 October) Mahler (arr. Deryck Cooke), Symphony No. 10 (19 December)

1961	Cello Sonata (7 July); *Jubilate Deo* (8 October); fifth and sixth volumes of folksong arrangements published	Lutoslawski, *Jeux vénitiens* (24 April) Penderecki, *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* (31 May)
1962	*War Requiem* (30 May)	Tippett, *King Priam* (29 May)
1963	Visits USSR (March); *A Hymn of St Columba* (2 June); *Psalm 150* (24 June); *Cantata Misericordium* (1 September); composes *Night Piece* for Leeds Piano Competition	Henze, Symphony No. 5 (16 May) Tippett, Concerto for Orchestra (28 August; dedicated to Britten)
1964	*Cello Symphony* (12 March); *Curlew River* (Orford, 12 June); *Nocturnal after John Dowland* (12 June); composes cadenzas to Haydn's Cello Concerto in C (18 June); Aspen Award (31 July)	Stravinsky, *Abraham and Isaac* (23 August) Messiaen, *Couleurs de la cité céleste* (17 October) Cowell, Concerto for Koto (18 December)
1965	Visits India (February); Order of Merit (23 March); *Gemini Variations* (19 June); *Songs and Proverbs of William Blake* (24 June); Cello Suite No. 1 (27 June); *Voices for Today* (24 October); *The Poet's Echo* (2 December)	Stravinsky, *Huxley Variations* (17 April) Boulez, *Eclat* (26 March)
1966	*The Burning Fiery Furnace* (Orford, 9 June); composes cadenzas to Mozart's Piano Concerto K482 (July); visit to USSR to spend Christmas with Shostakovich	Tippett, *The Vision of Saint Augustine* (19 January) Xenakis, *Terretektorh* (3 April) Stravinsky, *Requiem Canticles* (8 October)
1967	*Hankin Booby* (1 March); *The Building of the House* (opening of Snape Maltings concert hall, 2 June); *The Golden Vanity* (3 June); realization of Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* (25 June)	Ligeti, Cello Concerto (19 April) Copland, *Inscape* (13 September) Stockhausen, *Hymnen* (29 November)
1968	*The Prodigal Son* (Orford, 10 June); Cello Suite No. 2 (17 June)	Birtwistle, *Punch and Judy* (Aldeburgh, 8 June) Berio, *Sinfonia* (10 October)
1969	*Children's Crusade* (19 May); Snape Maltings concert hall burns down (7 June); arrangements of J. S. Bach's *Geistliche Lieder* (18 June); Suite for Harp (24 June)	Maxwell Davies, *8 Songs for a Mad King* (22 April) Shostakovich, Symphony No. 14 (29 September; dedicated to Britten)
1970	Concert tour of Australasia (spring); re-opening of Snape Maltings (7 June)	Carter, Concerto for Orchestra (5 February) Tippett, *Songs for Dov* (12 October) Lutoslawski, Cello Concerto (14 October)
1971	*Who Are These Children?* (4 May); *Owen Wingrave* (BBC TV, 16 May); *Canticle IV: Journey of the Magi* (26 June)	Bernstein, *Mass* (8 September) Ligeti, *Melodien* (10 December)
1972	At work on *Death in Venice*	Tippett, Symphony No. 3 (22 June) Maxwell Davies, *Taverner* (12 July) Crumb, *Vox Balaenae* (10 October)
1973	Heart surgery (8 May); *Death in Venice* (Snape, 16 June)	Maderna, *Satyricon* (16 March)

1974	Revises *Paul Bunyan* (summer); Cello Suite No. 3 (21 December)	Glass, *Music in 12 Parts* (1 June) Tavener, *Ultimos Ritos* (23 June)
1975	*Canticle V: The Death of Saint Narcissus* (15 January); revises String Quartet in D (7 June; composed in 1931); *Suite on English Folk Tunes* (13 June); *Sacred and Profane* (14 September)	Boulez, *Rituel* (2 April) Berio, *Chemins IV* (17 October)
1976	*Paul Bunyan*, revised version (BBC radio, 1 February); *A Birthday Hansel* (19 March); Life Peerage (12 June); *Phaedra* (16 June); composes *Welcome Ode* (August) and *Praise We Great Men* (unfinished); arranges folksongs with harp accompaniment (summer); dies on 4 December, aged 63; String Quartet No. 3 given posthumous first performance on 19 December	Stockhausen, *Sirius* (18 July) Glass, *Einstein on the Beach* (25 July)

Introduction

MERVYN COOKE

Not long ago I attended a formal dinner at a college belonging to one of Britain's most ancient and prestigious universities, and was introduced to the institution's head of house as someone engaged in researching the music of Benjamin Britten. 'Really?' came the Master's reply. 'There's not much point to the Aldeburgh Festival now that Britten and Pears are both dead, is there?' Before I could respond, the Master had moved swiftly down the line, presumably to impart another morsel of wisdom in whatever subject-area was appropriate to the next guest. After dinner, I sat next to the wife of a senior fellow and was introduced in a similar manner. 'Well,' she said as she sipped her coffee thoughtfully, 'I'm afraid I find Britten's music just too *aggressively* homosexual, don't you?' This time I managed to issue a sophisticated rejoinder (the single word 'Why?', if I remember rightly), upon which she rapidly changed the subject.

The persistence of such bigoted views on Britain's most internationally successful and respected twentieth-century composer seems scarcely credible as the century draws to a close, and it remains an uncomfortable fact that – in his native country, at least – a small but vociferous body of commentators still seeks to denigrate Britten's self-evidently significant artistic achievements. Britten was himself no stranger to such negativity, and the seeds of an incipient critical malaise were sown as early as the 1930s when he was making a name for himself as a precocious newcomer armed with a formidable compositional technique embodying a resourcefulness and flexibility never before encountered in British music. From the influences of French impressionism and the Second Viennese School evident in the *Quatre chansons françaises* (written in the summer of 1928 at the age of fourteen, and discussed by Christopher Mark in Chapter 1) to the emulations of Mahler, Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Shostakovich and Prokofiev in works dating from his time as a composition scholar at the Royal College of Music (1930–3), the range of music absorbed by Britten was phenomenally broad. During his working apprenticeship as a composer for the GPO Film Unit (1936–8) – a famous product of which is examined by Philip Reed in Chapter 3 – and as the creator of incidental music for stage projects mounted by the Group Theatre and Left Theatre in the same period, Britten's ability to assimilate any musical idiom required of him grew still more pronounced. His

stylistic boundaries broadened to the extent of absorbing jazz elements, either reproduced in straight pastiche (as in his music to a west-end production of J. B. Priestley's *Johnson over Jordan* in 1939) or more subtly disguised (witness his brilliantly inventive score to the Auden–Isherwood collaboration *The Ascent of F6* in 1937).

Such astonishing technical facility was not destined to endear Britten to the infamously insular critics of inter-war Britain, all the more so because he had resolutely rejected the idiom of earlier Establishment composers such as Vaughan Williams by responding to almost exclusively Continental influences. Compositional 'cleverness' was itself looked upon with suspicion in those years, and Peter Evans has justifiably criticized Vaughan Williams's music for its 'disdain for technical finesse approaching irresponsibility'.[1] Vaughan Williams is reputed to have referred to the young Britten's music as 'very clever but beastly' during his time as a student at the Royal College, lamenting the fact that an English public schoolboy of his age should be writing 'this kind of music'.[2] For his part, Britten felt Vaughan Williams's music to be blighted by 'technical incompetence', and declared (with the benefit of several decades of hindsight) that his own attempt 'to develop a consciously controlled professional technique . . . was a struggle away from everything Vaughan Williams seemed to stand for'.[3] Britten's *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* (1937), perhaps the finest outcome of the young composer's prodigious eclecticism, were hailed at the time of their première merely for their 'virtuosity', 'brilliant ingenuity' and 'strikingly original effects'.[4] His Piano Concerto, dating from the following year, provoked this schoolmasterly outburst from the same distinguished reviewer:

> This is not a stylish work. Mr Britten's cleverness, of which he has frequently been told, has got the better of him and led him into all sorts of errors, the worst of which are errors of taste. How did he come to write the tune of the last movement? Now and then real music crops up . . . but on the whole Mr Britten is exploiting a brilliant facility that ought to be kept in subservience.[5]

Years later, Britten's virtuosic early instrumental scores would be more warmly appreciated for their wit, ingenuity and vivid characterization (aspects explored by Eric Roseberry in Chapter 12), and seen as laying the firm yet flexible stylistic foundations on which the composer's later work would build. His output of instrumental music came to include several substantial 'symphonic' scores and a small body of impressive chamber music (examined by Arved Ashby and Philip Rupprecht in Chapters 11 and 13 respectively), putting paid to wearily repetitious allegations that Britten's success was restricted to text-based projects such as opera and vocal music (the latter surveyed by Ralph Woodward in Chapter 14).

During Britten's sojourn in the USA in the Second World War, attempts to tarnish his reputation took a more sinister and personal turn. A notorious example was a statement by George Baker of the Royal Philharmonic Society in a letter published by the *Sunday Times* on 15 June 1941:

> In your last issue, Mr Ernest Newman, under the heading 'Thoroughbreds', said he had 'been fighting single-handed the "battle of Britten" '.
>
> There are a number of musicians in this country who are well content to let Mr Newman have this dubious honour. The young gentleman on whose behalf he fights, Mr Benjamin Britten, was born in 1913. He is in America. He may have had perfectly good reasons for going there, and may decide to return to his native land some time or other. In the meantime I would like to remind Mr Newman that most of our musical 'thoroughbreds' are stabled in or near London and are directing all their endeavours towards winning the City and Suburban and the Victory Stakes, two classic events that form part of a programme called the Battle of Britain; a programme in which Mr Britten has no part.

It was, of course, the spectacularly triumphant staging of *Peter Grimes* in 1945 that secured Britten's international reputation soon after his homecoming – although that success, too, was tainted by open resentment against the three-man team of conscientious objectors (Britten, Peter Pears and Eric Crozier) responsible for mounting the opera's first production. Britten's pacifism was nevertheless to prove a deep and lifelong commitment which, as Donald Mitchell reveals in Chapter 10, by no means bore artistic fruit merely in those scores where the preoccupation is most obvious.

In the immediately post-war years, Britten's creativity and sense of cultural responsibility both seemed unstoppable as he produced a steady stream of universally acclaimed stage works and pursued his firm commitment to touring them to venues well outside the privileged milieu of central London. The evolution of the versatile medium of chamber opera, charted by Arnold Whittall in Chapter 5, was but the first of many compositional developments rooted in considerations of practicality and accessibility. The success of the Aldeburgh Festival, founded in 1948 and discussed by Judith LeGrove in Chapter 17, furthered the sense that here was a musician devoted to the wider community, his compositional gifts backed up by phenomenal talents as a performer which made him the envy of many a less-gifted composer. The warmly complimentary tone generally adopted by Britten's reviewers began to change around 1951, however, when the composer's former champion, the influential Ernest Newman, dismissed *Billy Budd* in print as a 'painful disappointment'.[6] The tone of other reviews of this Festival of Britain opera was unusually

carping. One writer shed intriguing light on the widespread shift in critical stance by commenting that 'one always resents having it dinned into one's ears that a new work is a masterpiece before it has been performed; and Benjamin Britten's "Billy Budd" was trumpeted into the arena by such a deafening roar of advance publicity that many of us entered Covent Garden ... with a mean, sneaking hope that we might be able to flesh our fangs in it'.[7] The débâcle surrounding the notorious gala première of Britten's Coronation opera, *Gloriana*, brought this resentment swiftly to a head in 1953 in circumstances re-assessed by Antonia Malloy-Chirgwin in Chapter 6.

Ernest Newman's short-sighted response to *Billy Budd* had been promptly rebuffed by Donald Mitchell, who had by the early 1950s begun to make a name for himself as an outspoken champion of Britten's music in the pages of his journal *Music Survey*.[8] Mitchell's editorial work with Hans Keller led naturally enough to their decision to collaborate on a volume of essays written by a long list of distinguished contributors and entitled *Benjamin Britten: A Commentary on His Works From a Group of Specialists* (DMHK), which appeared in 1952. The composer declared himself to be delighted with 'the seriousness of it, the thoroughness of its planning & editing, its excellent get-up, & the admirable quality of a good deal of the contents'.[9] Less pleased were the representatives of the growing anti-Britten lobby, startled as they were at the audacity of issuing a detailed – and positive – study of a composer still only thirty-nine years of age. Peter Tranchell spoke for them in a brutal review entitled 'Britten and Brittenites', which took several of the symposium's contributors to task for their modish use of 'musicological jargon', the author barely disguising his resentment that here was a book daring to consider a living composer 'great' in spite of his objection that 'the serious appraisal of a creative artist's work must be left to posterity'.[10] Tranchell concluded by extending 'to the subject of this hero-worship my condolences that the book should not have been better written and that he should have been the victim of so inopportune an outburst of noble intentions'.

It would have taken considerably more than a few griping critics to check Britten's continuing meteoric career, however, and the international success of major scores such as *The Turn of the Screw* (1954) and the *War Requiem* (1962) easily compensated for the temporary set-backs of *Gloriana* (1953) and *The Prince of the Pagodas* (1957), neither of which was initially well received – although posterity has since accorded both works a more serious and balanced appraisal. Britten's stylistic horizons continued to broaden in the 1950s with his investigations of dodecaphony and Far Eastern cultures (his creative encounter with the latter is outlined in Chapter 9), both of which encouraged him to strive for ever

greater economy and clarity in his music. The emotional impact of the *War Requiem* on the popular imagination, even more spectacular than that of *Peter Grimes* before it, kept him firmly in the limelight in the 1960s, and the work's stature was deemed by some to be sufficiently daunting as to make criticism 'impertinent'.[11] Needless to say, reaction against this view soon set in, fuelled by discomfort that *The Times* could loudly proclaim the work to be a masterpiece well before a note of the score had been heard in public.

Britten's respectability in musicological circles, initiated by the Mitchell–Keller symposium, began to grow steadily with the appearance of a number of analytical articles on his music in the 1960s. Several perceptive essays by Peter Evans would later form the basis for his detailed book on Britten's musical language (PE*MB*), first published in 1979 and followed three years later by Arnold Whittall's comparative account of the music of Britten and Tippett (AW*BT*). Whittall noted the significance of Evans's monumental tome as the first substantial study of any twentieth-century British composer 'to emphasize technical matters in a systematic manner'.[12] Both books remain the first resort for any would-be student of Britten's music, and have enabled a younger generation of Britten analysts to embark on more elaborate dissections of the composer's works with the confidence born of belonging to a well-established musicological tradition.

A handful of less technical accounts of Britten's life and work had already appeared during the last decade and a half of the composer's lifetime (including two books largely devoted to his operas, published in quick succession by Patricia Howard and Eric Walter White in 1969–70),[13] and Britten's death in 1976 at the age of sixty-three was quickly and inevitably followed by a rash of personal tributes. The first important step in objectively chronicling the composer's life and career in some detail came two years later with Donald Mitchell's and John Evans's vivid pictorial account (DMJE). Then, in 1981, Michael Kennedy's informative and concise biography (MK*B*) elevated the composer to the hallowed status of 'Master Musician'. In the same year, Mitchell began his concerted attempt to illuminate the socially, politically and artistically fascinating years of Britten's first creative period with his book *Britten and Auden in the Thirties* (DM*BA*), a topic reconsidered here by Paul Kildea in Chapter 2. Mitchell's work on Britten's early period culminated in 1991 with the appearance of an encyclopaedic two-volume edition of the composer's correspondence up to 1945, co-edited with Philip Reed (DMPR) – a mine of information on everything from the critical reaction to premières of Britten's works, to intriguing trivia such as the composer's preferred brand of toothpaste. The third volume of Britten's letters is

currently in preparation, and the project is likely to extend to at least two further volumes thereafter.

The surge of interest in Britten studies in the 1980s would scarcely have been possible without the formidable research resources offered to scholars by the Britten–Pears Library, established at Britten's home at The Red House, Aldeburgh, at the start of the decade. Philip Brett's study of *Peter Grimes* (PB*PG*), published in 1983, showed how valuable Britten's libretto drafts and composition sketches could be in shedding light on the composer's working methods and extra-musical preoccupations, and his book became a model for later monographs on Britten's major works. Many of the essays in the present volume are indebted to the source materials at Aldeburgh for their insights.

Brett's more recent publications have continued to illuminate the creative results of Britten's homosexuality, a topic discussed with increasing frankness since the composer's death (though not always with equal relevance to his art). Clifford Hindley, whose work is represented in Chapter 8, has provided many perceptive and thought-provoking interpretations of Britten's operas from this perspective. Humphrey Carpenter's controversial biography of the composer (HC*BB*), published in 1992, set out to provide a warts-and-all account of Britten's private life and offers the most comprehensive account of the composer's character yet to be made available. The motivation behind Carpenter's close questioning of several men who were taken under Britten's avuncular wing in their youth is transparent enough, although none confessed to any physical dimension to the relationship. (Britten's complex attitude towards childhood and all that it symbolizes, which bore fruit not only in music specifically conceived for children to play but also in various stage and vocal works, is considered afresh by Stephen Arthur Allen in Chapter 15.) Carpenter's otherwise scrupulously well-sourced book unfortunately bases many of its assumptions concerning the tensions in Britten's psyche upon sexual incidents for which only the flimsiest of evidence survives: an alleged proclivity for little boys on the part of Britten's father, and Eric Crozier's recollection that Britten confessed to having been 'raped' while at school. The author's preoccupation with the latter trouvé inevitably colours his interpretations of the operas: thus the Novice's flogging in *Billy Budd*, of which the victim sings 'The shame'll never pass', is directly linked to Britten's putative 'rape', which took place 'possibly while undergoing a flogging'; the opera as a whole is reduced to an allegory of life in a brutal prep-school.[14] (It might strike the sceptical observer as somewhat odd, however, to find a composer allegedly so traumatized by sexual violation in his youth making a musical in-joke concerning rape in his comic opera *Albert Herring*, where he quotes from the earlier *Rape of Lucretia*: see

p. 103.) Carpenter's attempt to view all Britten's stage works as fundamentally autobiographical leads him up some amusing garden paths. The spoken dialogue at the end of *Grimes* exists, we are told, because 'Britten has perhaps identified so closely with Grimes that he cannot portray his death musically. Death means for Grimes what it would mean for Britten, the end of all music.' This theme is resumed in the discussion of *Owen Wingrave*, which again contains speech at 'one of those moments in Britten's operas that are too intense for singing' (!): Kate's challenge to Owen to sleep in the haunted room is read 'as if Auden had suddenly returned and had again thrown down his 1942 gauntlet' – a reference to Auden's famous letter to Britten in which he advised him 'to suffer, and make others suffer' if he were to develop to his 'full stature'.[15]

Consideration of the tensions and frustrations in Britten's personal life may well lend added insight into the preoccupations that coloured his stage and vocal works, but the ongoing fascination with the composer's sexuality seems in danger both of lending too one-sided a slant to interpretations of his operas (the universal appeal of which continues to be vividly demonstrated by numerous high-profile stagings across the globe) and distracting attention from his purely musical achievements. Much of the attractiveness of Britten's art lies in the scope if offers for interpretation on numerous levels, whether arising from the designedly ambiguous dramatic suggestions of his operas, or through a refined musical language that somehow manages to speak directly to the wider public while keeping even the most rigorously systematic musical analysts in employment for the foreseeable future. In that 'somehow' lies the simultaneous freshness and intellectual appeal of a style that, in Robin Holloway's words, 'has the power to connect the avant-garde with the lost paradise of tonality; it conserves and renovates in the boldest and simplest manner; it shows how old usages can be refreshed and remade, and how the new can be saved from mere rootlessness, etiolation, lack of connexion and communication'.[16]

Posterity, on the whole, continues to serve Britten well. Interest in the composer's work has never been so widespread, and the quantity and range of postgraduate dissertations devoted to his music on both sides of the Atlantic is formidable. The richness and suggestiveness of Britten's operatic language, in particular, ensure that no commentator can ever hope to have the final interpretative word, and a vast amount of primary source material relating to the composer has yet to be studied in the detail it deserves. The present volume presents a varied collection of essays on a wide range of topics central to Britten's career, some written by those who knew the composer personally and were at the cutting edge of Britten research at its inception, others the work of those who were much too

young to have formed a critical response to his music while he was still alive. One thing all the contributors share is their keen awareness of the rare ability of Britten's music to speak forcibly to a wide audience, even to those listeners whose lack of confidence in musical technicalities might influence them to fight shy of a contemporary idiom. This unusually wide appeal is reflected in the dauntingly extensive catalogue of recordings of Britten's music currently available, perhaps a more potent reflection of an undiminished appreciation of the composer's art two decades after his death than any amount of academic argument advanced in its favour. No one can today claim that Britten's music is not destined to outlive the memory of Pears's interpretations, as once was predicted by the more vociferous of the composer's detractors, or that Aldeburgh and its associated activities have not comfortably outlived the artists who nurtured them half a century ago.

PART ONE

Apprenticeship

1 Juvenilia (1922–1932)

CHRISTOPHER MARK

It is clear from the assuredness of his Op. 1, the *Sinfonietta*, that Britten was already a composer of some experience when he started work on the piece in June 1932 at the age of eighteen.[1] He himself hinted at the extent of that experience in interviews and articles published in the early and mid-1960s,[2] while evidence of it began to emerge in the late 1960s and early 1970s when he released reworked versions of a few childhood pieces: the *Five Walztes* [*sic*] for piano, originally written between 1923 and 1925 (published in 1970); *Tit for Tat*, a collection of songs written between 1928 and 1931 (1968); and a String Quartet in D major written in 1931 (1975). Because of the reworkings, however, the published versions of these pieces are not reliable as indicators of Britten's early achievement.[3] It was only after his death and the establishment in 1980 of the archive in the Britten–Pears Library in Aldeburgh, when access to unrevised material became possible, that a critical portrait of his juvenilia could begin to be constructed.

By 1987 most of the music composed before the *Sinfonietta* had been listed in *A Britten Source Book* (*BSB*), and a few key childhood works had been performed, recorded and published under the auspices of the Britten Estate.[4] Until much more recently, though, the only juvenilia available for study were these works and those donated to the British Library in lieu of death duties, so that commentaries on Britten's early progress have of necessity been circumspect.[5] Now that the entire corpus of extant juvenilia can be surveyed, it is clear that nothing short of an extended study will do it justice. What is offered here is a brief overview, with some more detailed observations on particularly significant pieces.[6]

It is well known that one of the major influences on Britten's compositional development was Frank Bridge, whom Britten first met in the autumn of 1927 and with whom he studied from January 1928. Bridge was initially reluctant to see him because he was 'always being asked to interview young people who were supposed to show musical promise, which they rarely had', but he was persuaded by Audrey Alston, Britten's viola teacher, to do so.[7] Clearly, he was impressed; and not least, one may surmise, by the sheer volume of music Britten had composed. The major items are listed chronologically in Table 1.1, although those dating from

1925 and 1926 were not all completed. For instance, the Octett of June 1925 has a substantial first movement, but the 'Presto' second movement peters out after a few bars, and no other movement was attempted. Other incomplete pieces include the Mass in E minor, abandoned in the middle of the Credo, and the second movement of the untitled orchestral piece, both also composed in 1925. However, the vast majority of pieces were completed, and this determination to see a project to its conclusion, plus the business-like presentation of his scores (the Symphony in D minor, for example, is provided with rehearsal numbers even though the possibility of a performance must have seemed unlikely), must also have convinced Bridge about Britten's seriousness. Most impressive of all, however, would have been the steady improvement of skills and the expansion of creative vision between 1925 and the middle of 1927, a period that, for reasons that will become clear, I shall divide into two: 1925 to mid-1926, and mid-1926 to late 1927.

In an earlier study of the juvenilia I observed that, on the basis of the pre-Bridge music I had been able to see, 'Britten's initial musical environment was all too representative of the conservativeness and provinciality of English music-making'.[8] Examination of the complete corpus confirms that up to around April 1926 the underlying style is essentially classical and early romantic, with little sign of any influence more modern than Brahms, let alone any knowledge of contemporary developments. It is often not possible to determine specific stylistic models, still less model compositions, though Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Schumann and Brahms all suggest themselves at various points.

Mozart's influence is most obvious in the Violin Sonata in D major (April 1925), especially at the end of the first movement,[9] but it is also present in the soprano aria 'Gratias agimus tibi' from the Mass in E minor (March–April 1925), not least in the wide vocal range (from b to a^2). At least one harmonic event in this aria, the bald shift from B minor to D major in bar 3, is more suggestive of Schubert, however, and it is he who is the guiding spirit behind *The Elected Knight*, a grand setting (multi-sectioned, along the lines of 'Viola' or 'Sehnsucht') of Henry Longfellow's narrative poem completed in June 1925. Another Schubertian third-shift, from B♭ to G♭, appears in the first of the Ten Walztes (1922–5).[10] Surprisingly, perhaps, there is little sign of Chopin in these pieces. However, the Polish composer clearly lies behind the second of the Two Fantasies 'Op. 17' (June 1925) as well as the Masurka [*sic*] in F♯ minor 'Op. 43a' (18 April 1926) and parts of the Fantasie in E♭ 'Op. 29' (10–24 December 1925) – principally in terms of texture, though the harmonically oblique opening of the first of these works suggests his influence too. Ex. 1.1 shows another oblique opening, the piano introduction to

Table 1.1: Chronology of Selected Juvenilia

1922–3	'Beware!' (voice and piano)
1922–5	Ten Walztes [*sic*]
?1924	'The March of the Gods into Paridise [*sic*]' (piano duet)
1925	Andante in F major (violin and piano)
	Fantasia (piano)
March–April	Mass in E minor (soloists, chorus and orchestra)
April	Sonata in D major (violin and piano)
June	*The Elected Knight* (voice and piano)
	Octett in D major (2 violins, 2 violas, 2 celli, 2 doublebasses)
	Two Fantasies, Op. 17 (piano)
28 July – 3 August	Piano Sonata (Grand) No. 3 in B♭, Op. 5
August–September	4 Scherzos (piano)
	Untitled orchestral piece in two movements
14 November	Rondo Capriccio in B minor, Op. 28 No. 1 (piano)
December	3 Fantasies (piano)
?1925/6	Allegro Appassionata in G minor (piano)
	Allegro ma non troppo in D major (violin and piano)
1926	
4 January	Suite No. 5 in E major, Op. 30 No. 2 (piano)
5–10 January	3 Toccatas (piano)
10–12 January	4 Etudes Symphoniques (piano)
7 April	Trio in Fantastic Form (violin, viola and piano)
17 April	Sonata in A (cello and piano)
18 April	Masurka [*sic*] in F♯ minor, Op. 43a (piano)
29 April	Overture No. 1 in C, Op. 44 (orchestra; version 2)
1–29 June	Ouverture (orchestra; under pseudonym 'Never Unprepared')
5 September	Suite fantastique for large orchestra and piano obbligato
	(second movement dated 21 April 1926)
26 September	Poème No. 1 in D (orchestra)
24 December	Poème No. 2 in B minor (small orchestra)
29 December – 3 January	Poème No. 3 in E (orchestra)
1927	
17 January – 28 February	Symphony in D minor (large orchestra)
12–14 February	Poème No. 4 in B♭ (small orchestra)
14–19 February	Poème No. 5 in F♯ minor (orchestra)
March–May	String Quartet in G
June–July	String Quartet in A minor
29 July – 2 August	*The Pale Stars are Gone* (chorus, piano and strings)
22 August – 5 September	*Chaos and Cosmos*, symphonic poem for large orchestra
27 September	Sonata No. 10 in B♭ (piano)
October–February	Sonata No. 11 in B (piano)
1928	
25 January	*Dans les bois* (orchestra)
6 March	*Humoreske* (orchestra)
11 April	String Quartet in F
16 April	Menuetto in A minor (piano)
16–23 April	Elegy (strings)
13 June	'Silver' (voice and piano)
13 June – 31 August	*Quatre chansons françaises* (soprano and orchestra)
31 December – 25 February	'Tit for Tat' (voice and piano)
1929	
1 January – 7 February	'A Song of Enchantment' (voice and piano)
7 January – 24 April	*The Quartette* (SATB soloists)
13 January – 25 October	*Elizabeth Variations* (piano)
26 January – 8 March	*Miniature Suite* (string quartet)
28 January – 21 March	Rhapsody (string quartet)
30 March – 22 April	Rhapsody (violin, viola and piano)

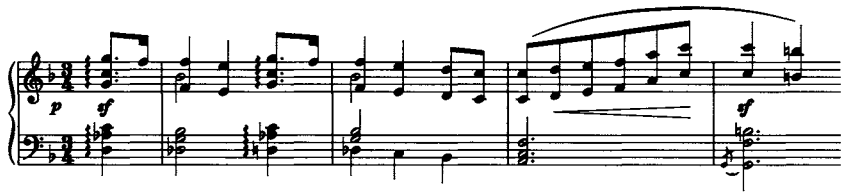
Table 1.1: (*cont.*)

30 March – 15 January	Bagatelle (violin, viola and piano)
June	'The Birds' (version 1)
21–31 October	*Introduction and Allegro* (viola and strings)
17 November – 24 December	2 Pieces (violin, viola and piano)
1930	
3 January – 17 April	*Quartettino*
11 April – 1 June	Piece (violin and piano)
9 July	*A Hymn to the Virgin* (double chorus)
1 August	Piece for viola solo [Elegy]
7 August	Movement for wind sextet (flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, horn and bassoon)
27 August	Sketch No. 1, 'D. Layton' (strings)
10 September	Sketch No. 2, 'E.B.B.' (viola and strings)
16 September – 27 December	3 Pieces (piano)
23 December – 17 January	'Vigil' (voice and piano)
1931	
February – 26 March	*Thy King's Birthday* (soprano, contralto and mixed chorus)
1 April – 6 May	*12 Variations on a Theme* (piano)
8 May – 2 June	String Quartet in D major
8–24 June	3 Small Songs (soprano and chamber orchestra)
12–28 August	*Plymouth Town* (ballet; orchestra)
26 December	*Psalm 150: 'Praise ye the Lord'* (chorus and orchestra)
1932	
19 January	*Psalm 130: 'Out of the Deep'* (chorus and orchestra)
25 January – 11 February	Phantasy in F minor (string quintet)
9 March – 4 May	Concerto in B minor (violin, viola and orchestra)
20 May	*Introduction and Allegro* (violin, cello and piano)
June	*Ballet on a Basque Scenario* (orchestra; incomplete)

the Andante in F major (1925); but here the homophonic texture and melodic cast suggest Schumann as a more likely model. As we might expect from the title, some of the strongest traces of that composer can be found in the Four Etudes Symphoniques (10–12 January 1926), particularly in No. 2 in A♭ minor, which seems to have been conceived as a study in hemiola.[11] Meanwhile Brahms is a more shadowy presence, hinted at by details such as the I–vii$^{\emptyset 7}$/V–V progression in B♭ over a V pedal in bars 25–6 of Waltz No. 8 of the Ten Walztes, and the weighty homophonic texture of the opening of the Rondo Capriccio in B minor 'Op. 28 No. 1' (1925).

The strongest influence up to the middle of 1926, however, was Beethoven. Later diary entries show the extent of Britten's admiration for him. On 13 November 1928 he declared Beethoven to be 'first . . . in my list of Composers . . . and I think will always be', while on 24 June 1929, after hearing Kreisler's recording of the Violin Concerto, he enthused, 'Oh! Beethoven, thou art immortal; has anything ever been written like the pathos of the 1st & 2nd movements, and the joy of the last?'[12] By the time he started to study with Bridge, Britten had acquired more miniature

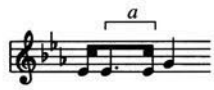
Example 1.1



scores by Beethoven than by any other composer, including Symphonies Nos. 1 to 6 (the 'Eroica' was the first score he bought), the second volume of an edition of the string quartets, the Violin Concerto, and Piano Concerto No. 4.[13] One of Britten's most overt compositional references to Beethoven at this time is the protracted cadencing at the end of the first movement of the Octett in D (1925), which imitates the rhetoric of the final pages of Beethoven's Fifth and Eighth Symphonies. The Fantasie in E♭ 'Op. 29' ends in a similar fashion. The key of this is, of course, Beethoven's heroic key, and several traits associated with Beethoven in that vein are apparent. They include the highly dramatic appearance in the first part of the ternary form of the flattened seventh degree (D♭), which is protracted as a pedal before forming the root of a diminished-seventh chord that resolves to F minor; the use of the dotted rhythmic motif shown in Ex. 1.2 (subsequently, *a* is isolated for reiteration by itself); and the protracted use of syncopation in the coda. Further Beethovenian influence at this time can be seen in the orchestration of both the untitled orchestral piece (1925) and the huge (84-page) Overture No. 1 in C 'Op. 44' (29 April 1926); in the harmonic breadth of the fourth of the 4 Scherzos (August 1925–January 1926) – see Plate 1 after the second-time bar – and in the cadential 'winding-down' that occurs at the end of the *Trio in Fantastic Form* (7 April 1926).

Of greater interest than these various influences *per se*, however, is the use to which Britten puts them, though it would be perverse to attach too much importance at this stage in his development to formal and syntactical niceties: in numerous contexts the composer evidently delights in expressive details and grand gestures for their own sake, and it could be argued that such involvement in 'the moment' is a more important attribute for a beginning composer. Perhaps it is not surprising that the compositional situations in which the details most often don't 'add up' are developmental and transitional ones: statements are generally more controlled. The Trio in Waltz No. 5 (bars 25–72 of the whole) demonstrates this.[14] This Waltz forms the first of the published *Five Walztes*, but the original Trio was severely pruned in 1970: only bars 25–40 – simple variants of the initial four-bar phrase – remain, with very few alterations. The

Example 1.2



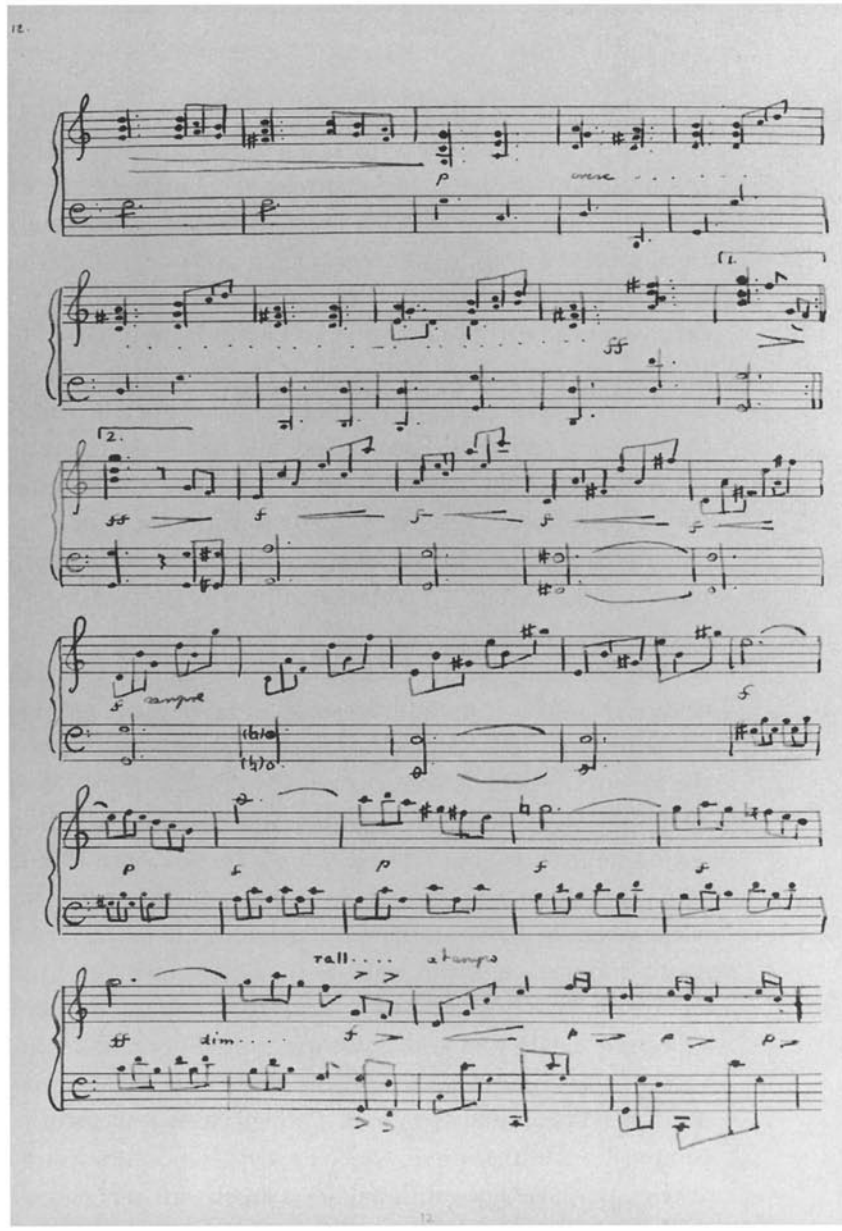
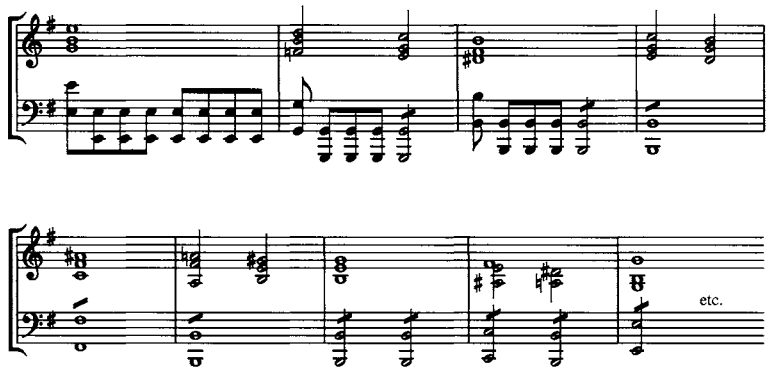
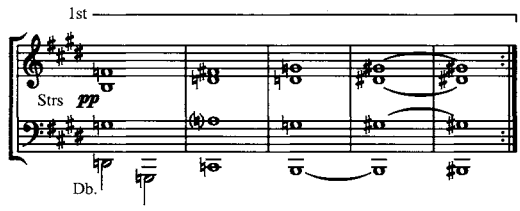


Plate 1 No. 4 of Four Scherzos (1925–6), autograph manuscript

Example 1.3



Example 1.4



remainder of the original Trio was obviously seen as casting too much caution to the wind (it is clearly intended as intensificatory, with its sudden shift from 'maestoso' to 'vivace' in bar 29, its fractured harmonic progressions, and its left-hand crescendoing tremolos leading to grandiloquent V/V–V cadences). Endings of sections are sometimes the cue for harmonic 'purple passages', such as bars 23–31 of the Prelude of the Mass in E minor (Ex. 1.3) and the first-time bars of the first movement ('Presto con molto fuoco') of the untitled orchestral piece (Ex. 1.4). In general, though, even if the content is sometimes wayward, Britten had a reasonably secure grasp of form and long-term timing. Sometimes he followed conventional formal models, but he was equally happy to depart from them, as in the second movement of the Beethovenian Sonata in A for cello and piano (17 April 1926), which, after starting out as an Andante, turns into a scherzo.

Some of Britten's most expressive and polished music of this time comes from the setting of texts. A very early example is 'Beware' (1922–3), its simple but telling expression deriving from the contrast between chromaticism and diatonicism learnt from the lieder Britten heard and sometimes accompanied during musical evenings in the Britten household.[15] Another example is the ending of *The Elected Knight.* Marked 'lento pathetico', the sorrowful mood (occasioned by the opposing knights' slaughtering of each other) is distilled traditionally enough

through chains of 7–6 suspensions; what is interesting in view of later operatic subject-matter is the appeal of a narrative with death as the final outcome.

The spring and summer of 1926 saw the beginnings of an updating of Britten's range of stylistic reference. He remarked in a letter to his mother dated 28 August that he had been to a concert at the Queen's Hall in London which 'was all modern music, and I have taken a great like to modern Orchestral music'.[16] The works included Ernest Schelling's *Suite fantastique* for piano and orchestra (1905), which he seems to have thought rather shallow, Delius's *Life's Dance* (1901; revised 1912), and three movements from Holst's *The Planets* (1914–16): 'Mars' (which he especially liked), 'Venus' and 'Mercury'. In fact, his fondness for orchestral music had already shown itself a few months earlier, when work on the Overture No. 1 initiated a one-and-a-half year period dominated by orchestral composition. By the standard of some of the surrounding pieces this overture, which exists in two versions, is disappointing: the material is undistinguished, the harmonic moves bald, and the orchestration clumsy. Neither have the stylistic horizons widened at this stage. They begin to do so, however, in his next completed orchestral piece, the Ouverture in B♭ minor (completed on 29 June) by 'Never Unprepared', the identifying motto Britten employed when he submitted the work to the BBC's 1926 Autumn Musical Festival Prize Competition.[17] The work is considerably more impressive than the earlier overture, not least in its orchestration. The wind and brass choirs are better voiced, for example, and the string writing is much more imaginative. The tonal moves within the otherwise standard nineteenth-century sonata-form design are also more adventurous. But perhaps the most remarkable feature of the music is its breadth, suggesting the example of Bruckner, or possibly, given the frequent use of measured tremolos, Sibelius.

More indicative of future directions, however, is the French influence in the *Suite fantastique* 'pour grand orchestra e con movemento quattro con pianoforte obbligato'. This, Britten's grandest conception to that date, was eventually completed on 5 September in time for his parents' silver-wedding anniversary, though the second movement ('Rondeau') was finished on 21 April before he began the Overture No. 1 in C. Cast in A minor, the work has as its first movement a reworking of the Trio from the second of the Ten Waltzes.[18] Meanwhile 'Rondeau' displays here and there a genuine relish in orchestral sound for perhaps the first time in Britten's work, particularly in the solo passages for bassoon and trumpets and in the use of percussion (the latter evokes the Iberian music of Debussy and Ravel). The most striking orchestration in the work occurs in the huge (102-bar) cadenza of the fourth movement, entitled 'Fantasie-